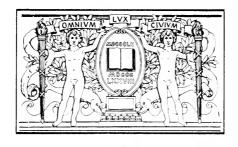
A DAUGHTER OF THESPIS

JOHN D. BARRY

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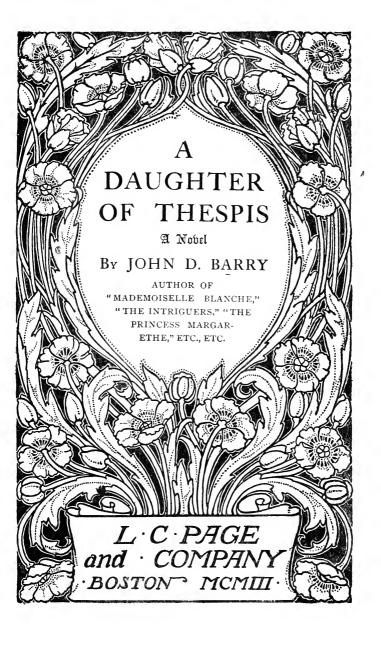


Professor Palmer from Joen -D. Borry 1903

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A DAUGHTER OF THESPIS



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A DAUGHTER OF THESPIS

Τ.

EVELYN JOHNSON was sitting in her dressingroom in the Yonkers Music Hall. On a chair lay the white muslin gown that she wore in the first act. Madge Guernsey was making up her face and neck in front of the mirror; beside her stood a dressingtable, littered with rouge-pots, cherry-lip, powderboxes, combs, and brushes.

Evelyn stared listlessly at her dress, as if she had not energy enough to put it on. "Oh, I'm so tired," she said, passing her hand over her face. "I'm glad the season is over."

"I should be glad, too, if I wasn't broke," said Madge. "Why didn't I have the sense to save up—like you?"

"Still, you have your home to go to," said Evelyn, with a sigh.

Madge yawned. "Oh, yes; homes are all right sometimes. But if I had to stay home all the time! Ugh!"

"Perhaps you'd feel differently if you didn't have a home," said Evelyn, quietly.

Evelyn Johnson was leading woman of the



"Flame of Life" Company. She had begun her career on the stage of the Boston Museum at the age of eighteen, as one of the supernumeraries, and she had been acting for seven years. Since the death of her mother, she had been brought up in Boston by her mother's unmarried sister, who sent her to the high school to make a teacher of her; but the work had broken down her health. After her recovery, one of her aunt's boarders secured for her a position at the Boston Museum. She had no romantic ambitions; she wished to become an actress simply to earn her living.

After her two years of apprenticeship at the Museum, Evelyn was given an understudy. One night the actress who had the part was taken ill. Somewhat to her surprise, Evelyn made a good impression. The papers praised her with the generosity always shown actors who meet an emergency; the manager expressed satisfaction. Evelyn played the part during the remaining fortnight that the piece ran, and two parts in new pieces. The next season she was engaged as a regular member of the stock company at a salary of fifteen dollars a week, and she remained in the company for three years. After the death of her aunt, during her last year at the Museum, she lived alone, in a boarding-house near the theatre.

At the close of her long experience at the Museum, Evelyn secured an engagement as leading woman of the "Flame of Life" Company. It was second-class, but she knew that no first-class company would give her so good a chance. That year was the happiest in her life; the world seemed to be opened to her. The company travelled through the West and



South, as far as California. Most of the other members, Evelyn was surprised to discover, rarely took the trouble to go about in the different cities and towns where they played; they preferred to stay in the hotel. Evelyn explored every new place, and she thought she could feel her mind expanding as her horizon enlarged.

It was when they had been on the road six weeks that Harold Seymour, the young Englishman who played opposite her in the piece, began to join her in her daily walks. He was a big, handsome man of thirty-two, with black curly hair and with a face that could bear being close-shaven. He had a deep chest and a heavy voice, and he was by far the best actor in the company. When the curtain went down on the climax of the last act, he used to laugh as he held her in his arms to hide the tears in his eyes.

Evelyn soon felt a new interest in her work. Her comrades spoke of her improvement. Her scene with Seymour in the first act was played with a tenderness she had never been able to express before; her jealousy in the second act seemed real, and her pathos, when her lover returned too late to save her from dying of a broken heart, used to move many of the women in the audience to tears.

The company soon began to discuss her friendship with Seymour. Mrs. Barton, the first old woman, repeated their remarks to Evelyn; she said she thought it was her duty. For the rest of the day Evelyn shut herself up in her room. That night, after the performance, she told Seymour they must not be seen together any more. When she refused to explain, he told her that he had been in love with her for months. That was how they became



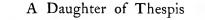
engaged. It was in Seattle, one cold February night, as they stood on the steps of the Albemarle Hotel.

In March, Seymour, whose ability had attracted the attention of Dodson, one of the most successful managers in the country, was engaged for the following year as leading juvenile of Dodson's Broadway Stock Company. He urged Evelyn to marry him at the close of the season and to give up acting; but she was afraid that marriage at the beginning of his career in New York might interfere with his success; so she signed again with the "Flame of Life."

She began her season in September. Every day Seymour wrote to her from New York, where he had taken an apartment. The new "Philip" was a man of forty, with a fondness for brandy, which she was obliged to inhale every night. In December, Harold Seymour wrote irregularly. Once, for four days, he did not write at all. Evelyn became nearly frantic, and she forgot her lines. Then at last she heard from him; he had been so busy learning two new parts that he had had no time to write. This excuse hurt her; he might have taken time. One night at the theatre, she found a newspaper, directed to her *en route*. It contained a marked paragraph exploiting a scandal in which Seymour was conspicuously mentioned.

That night she caught several members of the company watching her. Some of them had probably received copies of the paper, too. When she reached the hotel she found two letters from Seymour. She placed them unopened with the letters she had taken from her trunk, and she sent them all back.

After that night she lost interest in her work.



She began to hate the stage, the paint and powder, the dinginess of the dressing-rooms, the sight of the dull faces of the audience. As her interest waned, her acting deteriorated; the newspapers complained; the manager remonstrated. For a time she made an effort; but she was not surprised to hear that another actress had been engaged in her place for the following season.

As Evelyn placed in her belt the property rose that she wore during the first act, she sighed at the thought of giving up a character associated with the only happiness of her life.

"What time do you start for Boston?" asked Madge Guernsey, who devoted a great deal of time to her make-up, and was now at work on her eyebrows.

"Four o'clock train, I think," Evelyn replied, absently. She turned at the sound of a knock. A red-haired boy with a sharp nose thrust his head into the room.

"Say, Miss Johnson, Wesley's nearly crazy. Billy Buckner's gone off on a jag down in New York. I guess th' ain't goin' to be any show."

The red head disappeared, and the door was closed with a bang.

Evelyn looked at Madge Guernsey.

"No performance!" said Madge. "I knew that fellow'd queer us before the season was over. Did it just to spite Wesley, I suppose, because he wasn't engaged for next year." She glanced despairingly at her costume. "I might as well take this rig off an' go back to the hotel."

"Perhaps Mr. Wesley will get one of the boys to



play the part," said Evelyn. "Buckner has an understudy, hasn't he?"

"Tommy Watson's been understudying him; but he didn't come up. Wesley let him off so he could take the night train for home. He lives out in some God-forsaken place in Ohio. One of the boys is going to double up in his place."

A moment later the red head shot into the room

again.

"It's all right. Wesley's got some one from New York to play the part. He was in front. Wasn't it great luck, though?"

A second time the head vanished and the door banged.

"I suppose I shall have to pull him through, whoever he is," said Evelyn. "What a nuisance!"

"Perhaps he'll read the lines. Wesley must be in front of the curtain now apologising."

"The performance will probably be delayed a little while to give him a chance to read over the first act," Evelyn went on. "But he won't have to dress for it. 'Philip' wears street clothes, you know, in his first scene. Besides, he doesn't come on till the act's half over."

Again the door was thrown open, and the red head appeared.

"Everything ready. Miss Guernsey, here's your duster. Better hustle, or Wesley'll come swearing round here."

Madge seized the duster. "I'm going to make a mash on the new 'Philip,'" she said, as she closed the door behind her.

Evelyn could hear the last strains of the orchestra. After a brief silence, she knew the curtain had risen.



In a few moments it would be time for her to go on. But she must first speak to the substitute and talk over the business of their scene together. She rose quickly, pinned to her blond wig a large white straw hat with red roses, deftly touched her face with a powder puff, and stepped out into the corridor. The electrician was standing in his shirt-sleeves at one of the stage-entrances, and on a pile of old scenery two of the young men were playing poker. She could hear Wesley's rough voice denouncing Buckner. She wondered where the substitute was: probably in one of the dressing-rooms, trying to catch the drift of his lines before going on; it was strange Wesley hadn't sent him to talk over the stage business with her. But she had no time to go to his room; in a moment her cue would be spoken. He would have to trust to luck. Then she took her place in the wings, and after giving a few final touches to her hair and throwing back the train of her gown, she made her entrance.

Her first scenes dragged. As the time approached for the entrance of "Philip," she looked into the wings to see if Buckner's substitute were there. She could distinguish the dark outlines of a tall figure standing behind the electrician, his head bent low, probably over a prompt-book. The stage business required her to sit at the front of the stage, facing the audience, before "Philip" entered; he would come on without being heard and stand looking at her for a moment. When he spoke she would suddenly rise from her seat; on recognising him she would exclaim "Philip!" and stagger against the back of her chair.

As she took her seat after giving "Philip" his



cue, she heard swift steps on the stage. She at once thought of Harold Seymour, and a picture of Seymour, standing with his silk hat in one hand and his heavy stick in the other, flashed into her mind. She recited her soliloquy monotonously. When she heard "Mabel" whispered from behind, she started. She would have recognised the voice anywhere.

Evelyn stood so long without speaking, that Seymour whispered the line to her. Then she roused herself. Seymour, who was a quick study, and whose lines had come back to him as soon as he had read them once over, played with the old fire and finish. He had the facile, emotional temperament that makes good romantic actors. Every line he spoke conveyed a peculiar meaning to both of The piece was melodrama, made up of improbable situations, and mawkish sentimentality. Evelvn had never realised how bad it was until she played it with Buckner.

However, she could not help being inspired by the intensity with which Seymour acted. She forgot that the night was hot, that the audience was bored, that she herself was fagged. Their scene was long, and to-night it taxed her strength; it seemed to her that it never would end; Seymour elaborated it, by introducing new bits of business and by making long pauses between his speeches and her own whenever he could. She wondered if he was trying to torment her. His slowness was really due to the training of the stage-manager of the company to which he belonged, who valued deliberateness in acting. Yet, though anxious to finish the scene, she dreaded the climax. When the time came for



her to fall into his arms, instead of kissing her on the forehead as the stage business required him to do, and as he had always done, he kissed her on the mouth. Their lips were pressed together as the curtain fell with a slow swish to the stage. She trembled with indignation, and, her eyes flashing, she tore herself away from him, gathered her skirts in one hand, and ran to her dressing-room.

EVELYN threw herself into a chair, buried her face in her hands, among the rouge-pots and powder-boxes, and burst out crying.

"You'll look like a fright, my dear," said Madge, with a significant upward inflection.

"I'm the most wretched being in the world."

"But I wouldn't make myself more wretched if I were you. Besides, I wouldn't give any man the satisfaction of seeing that he could make me wretched."

"I can't help it."

Evelyn sat helplessly while Madge deftly unlaced her dress. She felt exhausted a few moments later as she rose to survey herself in the mirror.

"Well, you haven't improved your looks by that crying fit of yours. But you might look worse. Let me put just the least bit of rouge on that left cheek. There! That's better. Now you're all right. But if I were you I wouldn't have another deluge. I don't believe I could fix you up again."

"I don't see how I'm to get through."

"Oh, you'll be all right." Then Madge added, with a laugh: "He got Wesley out of a scrape, didn't he? If he hadn't come up to see you to-night, we couldn't have had any show. I kind of thought he might be in front."



Evelyn said nothing. "Oh, you spiteful thing!" Madge exclaimed, pushing her out of the dressing-room. On the stage, she gained courage. When the curtain rose the footlights stimulated her. She would show him how indifferent she could be. Besides, this act would be easier for her.

In her first scene with "Philip" Evelyn had to express the beginnings of jealousy. This was short, and, after their reconciliation, they left the stage together. When they reached the wings, she tried to disengage her arm, but Seymour held it.

"You don't seem very glad to see me, Evelyn," he said.

"Won't you release my arm?" she replied, looking into his face.

He shrugged his shoulders, and walked away. She hurried into her dressing-room with a curious feeling of satisfaction. He was sensitive, and she had hurt him. A few minutes later she had to return to the stage for the climax of the act. It was a long scene, calling first for reckless gaiety, which she knew she never did well, then for the reading of a letter disclosing her lover's perfidy, and the passionate outburst at the close. When the scene was over, Seymour whispered: "Bully for you! How you have improved!" She pretended not to hear the compliment, but it made her feel like the runner in a race when he hears the cheering of his friends.

The last act was an anticlimax. Evelyn thought that "Mabel Annerly" showed despicable weakness in forgiving the man who had deceived her; besides, the interest was not sustained, and the apathy of the audience always reacted upon her. To-night the excitement that had kept her up during the first three acts was exhausting, and she had little strength for the final scene. As they went on the stage,

Seymour noticed the change.

"You look tired," he whispered between their speeches. She made no reply, but he continued to fill the gaps in the dialogue with bits of talk.

"So you despise me," he said. . . . "Well, I suppose I deserve it; but you women have no pity. . . . You expect us all to be saints, and when you find that we're not you throw us down. . . . You might at least have read my letters. . . . If you knew what I've been through since you broke with me, perhaps you wouldn't be so unfeeling. . . . But some women like to make men suffer. . . . I thought that you weren't that kind. . . . But you're just like the rest of them."

It seemed to her as if the act never would end. Yet she knew she was playing with her old-time earnestness; she could feel that the audience was "with her": that inspiring sensation she had not experienced for several months. Several of the members of the company were in the wings watching her. Ever since the breaking of her engagement they had not had delicacy enough to conceal their pity for her.

When the curtain fell, Seymour held her in his arms. He released her without speaking, and she would have hurried away if the members of the company had not gathered round her to say goodbye. Mrs. Barton, who played the old woman, and who had been in the company the year before, had a chaffing conversation with Seymour; she said she was glad his New York successes hadn't made him

too stuck-up to play with common folks. Then she took him to one side, and Evelyn could see the pair in earnest conversation in a dark corner of the stage.

Several of the company were going down to New York that night; the others intended to stay at one of the local hotels. Evelyn usually went home with Mrs. Barton; but to-night she didn't know whether the old woman intended to go to the city or not.

After saying good-bye to the boys and to Mike, the property man, and Katy, his wife, Evelyn hesitated a moment before going to her dressing-room, trying to make up her mind to speak to Mrs. Barton, who was still talking with Seymour. She could not gather courage to interrupt the conversation; so turned away into the wings. But just as she was leaving the stage, the old woman called out:

"Wait a minute, dear."

Mrs. Barton came up in her old-fashioned skirts, her face covered with patches of rouge and powder. "Going down to New York? Yes, I'm going, too; I'll wait for you. We can catch the half-past eleven train. They run every half-hour, Katy says. Katy once lived here. My dear, you were great to-night. If you only did that every night you'd never leave New York. Wasn't he magnificent, though? I never saw him do so well in my life. Now, Evelyn, love, don't you think you've been a bit hard on the poor boy? He's been telling me all about it. He's all broke up. Couldn't you see that from his acting? I feel sorry for him, honest, I do. When you've been in the business as long as I have you won't be so hard on the men. Why,



they're mere children, actors. You can't expect 'em to be like other people."

She took Evelyn's hand affectionately; but Evelyn drew it away. She could not discuss Harold Seymour with Mrs. Barton, or with any one else. If he had asked Mrs. Barton to speak for him he had made a mistake.

"I must hurry and dress if I'm going to catch that train," she said.

When Evelyn entered the dressing-room, Madge Guernsey was smoothing the wrinkles around the waist of her jacket.

"Hello!" she said. "Is your party over?"

Evelyn sank dejectedly on a trunk in a corner of the stuffy little room. "I'm so tired."

"I should think you would be. It's a good thing you're going to have a vacation. You'd be down with nervous prostration if you kept on much longer."

"Oh, I'm so sick of living." Evelyn lifted the train of her white silk gown. "Just look at this dress, will you? I don't see how it can seem decent from the front."

"It's wonderful how these old things do go, though, ain't it?" said Madge, deftly depositing her comb and brush into her hand-bag, and closing it with a click. "There! Thank goodness, I'm all ready to get out of here." She began to waltz in the middle of the room.

"Don't Madge; please don't. You'll knock my make-up off the table."

"Say." Madge stopped, holding one arm at her waist. "Did you know Saunderson was in front to-night? Saunderson, mind you, the g-g-great Saunderson?"



"No, I didn't know it," said Evelyn, kicking off her white satin slippers.

"And what do you suppose he came up for? Why, to see me — me, America's leading soubrette. He's going to engage me for his new production, 'Deception,' with a star cast. I shall strike for two hundred a week."

"Did he come round?" Evelyn roused herself languidly and proceeded to take off the glittering bodice.

"No, he didn't. Wesley won't let any outsider come in by the stage-door, no matter who he is. Wesley's wild with me because I wouldn't sign for next year. What a beast that man is! I'm glad I am going to see the last of him to-night. It's kind of risky to hold off; but this time I'm mighty glad I did it."

"Sometimes you have to hold off," said Evelyn, removing her make-up with a piece of soft cloth.

"Oh, don't you worry. Any one that can act as you did to-night's sure of a job. Say! Maybe Saunderson will have something for you. Wouldn't it be great if we could be together another year?"

Madge stood in the middle of the room with her bag in one hand. She had a trim figure, bright eyes, and a determined mouth. She looked very pretty in her tailor-made suit.

"Wish that feller'd hurry up," she said, after a pause.

"Who?" Evelyn asked, still rubbing her face.

"Why, Harry, of course. Who do you think?"

"You'll have some one else next year, I suppose?"



"Of course I shall. They get awfully tiresome after one season."

"Don't you ever intend to settle down, Madge?"

"Now, Evelyn! How often have I told you it would kill me to settle down? Last night Harry asked me to marry him and go to his mother's in New Jersey for the summer. How's that for nerve? Think of Harry marrying on twenty-five a week! He's a nice fellow, but he ain't got any more talent than that yellow wig of yours up on the peg there. I tell him he ought to go back to his bank. He used to be in a bank, you know; he had a fine place. Some of these fellows are such idiots. They leave good jobs to go into this business. It's no business for a man anyway."

"Still, there must be men on the stage," said Evelyn.

"Sticks, you mean. They're nearly all sticks, I think."

They heard a light tap on the door.

"Ah, there he is. I can always tell his taps. Have you noticed how Harry's never without a stick in his hand and a cigarette in his mouth? Actors are queer things, ain't they?" Madge turned toward the door. "Wait a moment, dear. I'll be right out."

She went to the glass and surveyed herself as well as she could in so small a mirror. "How am I? All right? I want to leave the dear boy with a good impression. He's going to take me up to the hotel, and then he'll go down on the train to New York. Well, darling, I'm going. I'm awfully sorry. You've been just lovely all season long. And after all I went through with Belle Livingstone last year!



Well, of all vain women! Talk about conceited actresses! I couldn't get at the mirror half the time. Oh, she was the meanest! But you've been awfully good, and I shall miss you dreadfully this summer."

"Good-bye, Madge," Evelyn said. "Write to

me, won't you?"

"Of course, I will."

Madge lifted her veil from her mouth and kissed Evelyn several times. "Oh, you darling! I just love you! You're better than all the men in creation." Tears were running down her cheeks. She turned away to the looking-glass. "I'm a perfect spectacle," she said, readjusting her veil. "Well, once more, dear, good-bye."

She clutched Evelyn again and kissed her through the veil. "Hope you'll have a lovely summer and get a splendid engagement. And I do hope old Saunderson will engage us both. Let me know, anyway. I'll write you just as soon's anything happens."

She was at the door by this time with her hand on the knob. "Oh," she said, turning back and seizing Evelyn by both hands, "don't be mean to him, dear! Let him down easy. Now do, dear! Promise me, won't you?"

Evelyn drew her hands away. "Don't be silly,

Madge."

"Oh, I think you're awful mean!" Madge exclaimed, reproachfully, as she opened the door and passed out.

It took Evelyn only a short time to finish dressing and to pack her stage-outfit in her trunk. Long experiences of one-night performances in small towns had made her expeditious. When she reached Mrs. Barton's door, she could just distinguish a man's figure leaning against a pile of scenery. She rapped softly. Then she opened the door. There was no light in the room.

A voice spoke out of the darkness.

"Mrs. Barton asked me to tell you she couldn't wait. I told her I'd look after you."

Evelyn turned away without speaking, and with short steps she hurried to the stage-door. Seymour, with his long, slow strides, kept close behind her.

"You were great to-night," he said, when they reached the sidewalk.

"Thank you."

They walked on without speaking. When they reached the station Evelyn observed several of the company sitting together in the waiting-room; but she pretended not to see them and took a seat in a corner.

"I suppose you're off for Boston to-morrow?" said Seymour.

She nodded.

"Going down to Cohasset?"

- " Yes."
- "Mrs. Appleby's?"
- " Yes."
- "Wish I was going."

She looked away and began to examine the features of her fellow passengers.

"Oh, for heaven's sake, say something! Abuse me, if you like, but don't freeze me to death."

"I didn't ask for your company," she said, quietly.

"Oh, Evelyn!"

In spite of herself, she smiled. "I don't see how you can blame me."

This was a distinct concession. He felt relieved.

- "Blame you? I don't blame you. But you might have a little mercy on a fellow."
 - "You had none on me."
- "You threw me over without giving me a chance to say a word."
 - "What did you do to me?"
- "Oh, I'm no saint I know that. But it wasn't half so bad as you thought. Old Hodgson was a blackmailing scoundrel. He wanted to get money out of me. He tried to frighten me with his suit. But when he saw I wouldn't bleed, he dropped it."
 - "He did? He did drop it then?"

"Yes. And you knew nothing about it. You wouldn't listen to a word I had to say for myself."

"And I won't listen to you now. The whole thing makes me sick. Oh, I've seen too much of the stage. The worst that they say about it is true. I loathe it, I despise it. I wish I had never been inside a theatre."



He sat back in his seat and looked at her help-lessly.

"Well, I'll be —," he muttered, under his teeth, without finishing the exclamation.

"Don't let me ever hear you speak of that matter again," she said, in a low voice. "I don't want to hear a word. You're bad, like all the rest of them. That's enough for me to know."

When they left the train he saw that she walked less briskly than usual; she was probably tired, poor girl. He felt gratified when she allowed him to buy her elevated railroad ticket. That was a good sign. He thought of venturing a remark; but there was less risk in silence. When at last she spoke he had a feeling of satisfaction; he was careful, however, to conceal it.

"I hope I'm not taking you out of your way," she said.

"Oh, no. I'm at the Gorham House now. That isn't far from Mrs. Breen's. I suppose you're at Mrs. Breen's just the same?"

" Yes."

"Nice lady. I used to be very fond of her. Did she ask for me?"

"Yes," she said, after a pause.

"Hope you told her I was well."

His eyes smiled, but his face was serious.

"I said I didn't know anything about you."

"Well, I couldn't have said that if anybody had asked about you."

"Indeed?"

"Oh, I've kept track of you."

"I suppose you mean you've been reading my press notices."

1



"No. That is, I did read them at first — after you stopped writing to me. But I got sick of that. They didn't tell me anything I wanted to hear. I was sorry you weren't doing your best, that was all."

"I was doing my best," she replied, her eyes filling with tears.

After a long silence, he went on: "Your season was longer than usual this year, wasn't it? Don't you remember, we closed the first of May last year? Here it's nearly the first of July." She did not reply, and he resumed: "Do you remember the jolly dinner we had on the train? It was the ten o'clock, wasn't it? What train are you going on to-morrow?"

She hesitated a moment; then she said: "Four."

"It will be dark when you get into Boston."

"I'm used to being alone at night."

"Well, I suppose you can take a cab," he said, complacently.

"I'll walk. I've become very economical. I

haven't any engagement for next year."

He looked away for a moment. Then he suddenly turned toward her. "I say, Evelyn, would you care if I went on to Boston to-morrow, too?"

"It's none of my business what you do," she

replied, tartly.

"H'm." He hesitated. "Well, I've a good mind

to go."

The train had reached the neighbourhood of Twenty-third Street. It was past twelve o'clock, but the streets were full of life. They walked along Twenty-third Street, past the Eden Musée, and across Broadway. Madison Square was bright with



light from the advertisement in flaming letters above the Madison Square Bank Building.

When they reached Mrs. Breen's, Evelyn said:

"Thank you for coming down with me."

"I say, Evelyn, I should like immensely to go on with you. I'd give half my life to live those Cohasset days over again. I was very respectable down there last year, wasn't I?"

"You behaved very well, as I remember," she

said, judicially.

He gave one of his short laughs. "I believe women haven't any forgiveness in their natures. The Almighty forgot to put any in when he made them."

"He left it all in men, you mean?"

" Yes."

"I really must say good night. It's very late."

"Will you let me go on to-morrow?"

"I've already told you that I have no control over your movements."

"Then you don't mind if I go?"

"It will be a matter of indifference to me."

"Oh, you - you angel!"

"Good night," she said.

"I did think of going down to the Branch," he went on, plainly for the purpose of detaining her.

"What's that?"

"Long Branch, of course. But if I do, I'll spend a lot of money, and I'll whoop it up all summer."

"I dare say Cohasset would be better for you."

"Then I'll go on your advice."

"I haven't advised you to go. For my part I'd much rather not have you go."



"Well, then, I'll put it on purely selfish grounds. I'll go just for my own good."

"Well, I'm going to bed," she said, unceremoniously, stepping quickly up the steps. "Good night. Don't come up. I can open the door myself."

"Good night."

He stood on the sidewalk looking after her. When she had disappeared in the house he sighed, and hesitated a moment, as if he did not know in what direction to turn. Then he walked back toward Broadway, puffing nervously at his cigarette.

VI.

It was a relief to Evelyn to be alone at last. For hours she lay sleepless on her bed. Many times she went over the events of the evening, rehearsing word for word the conversation she had had with Seymour; hearing again and again the remarks he had made during the progress of the play. She fell asleep at last from exhaustion, and she did not wake till nine o'clock.

After breakfast she started for Mrs. Freeman's Theatrical Agency. She found the place filled with actors and actresses, talking and laughing. She looked around quickly; she knew none of them. The women, who were nearly all young and pretty, wore tasteful summer dresses, and most of the men carried sticks. They all looked prosperous, and they seemed to be very happy. Evelyn took a seat in the corner of the main room, and waited for a chance to speak to Mrs. Freeman.

There were three connecting rooms; the building had evidently been used for a dwelling. The walls were lined with photographs of actors and actresses. Mrs. Freeman, large, fair, and middleaged, with a good-humoured face and a loud but pleasant voice, was talking with a group of girls. They all wanted engagements. Some of them related their experience during the season just ended.



Three had been stranded, and had had difficulty in getting home; four had been with companies that stopped playing two or three times during the season, and then went on again; several had received only a part of their salaries.

"I told Sexton," Evelyn heard one of them say, "that if he'd pay my board bill at the hotel in Tacoma, I'd let the rest of my salary go. He said he would; so the next day I got my trunks out by the skin of my teeth, and then I skipped." She added, with a vague smile, "I wonder if he's paid that bill yet."

As Mrs. Freeman continued to ignore her presence, Evelyn grew restless. She looked around the room at the photographs on the walls. They were the best evidence she had ever seen of the collective vanity of actors. Suddenly it flashed upon her why a certain French writer, whose stories she liked, despised actors. It was degrading to use the body for the purpose of exploiting spurious emotions. She recalled a remark once made by a popular author: "Actors seem to me mere backgrounds of men." Yes, they were mere backgrounds; sometimes they seemed to her to be only shadows.

Presently a tall, handsome young man, with a smooth face, entered the room. Even if she had not seen him before, Evelyn would have known him from his photographs as one of the most successful actors on the stage, and one of the most popular in the profession. His appearance was greeted with cries of welcome.

"Why, Harry Davidson," exclaimed Mrs. Freeman, seizing his extended hand, and kissing him on the lips. "When did you get in?"

Several of the actresses crowded around him, laughing and shaking hands. The men stood apart, and, leaning on their sticks, smiled amiably. Every one that he knew he greeted with extravagant demonstrations; several of the girls he kissed. Once he glanced at Evelyn, as if he expected her to bow to him; he probably thought he knew her; her picture must be somewhere in the collection on the wall.

The sight of those pictures depressed Evelyn. Many were yellow with age, and the women, in their old-fashioned gowns, looked like caricatures. With youth gone, what pathetic figures actors were! Evelyn had heard that the life of an actor was practically over at forty; at that age he had passed his prime, had become a mere hanger-on. Well, she had thirteen years of work before her; but she should be dead before that time; she could not live through thirteen years more of weary travelling, of smoky, jolting trains, of sleepless nights, of snatched sandwiches.

This gloomy picture was suddenly dissipated by the voice of Mrs. Freeman. "Why, how are you?" the agent said, with a broad smile. "I didn't know you at first. When did you come in?"

"About half an hour ago."

"Oh, I didn't mean that. I saw when you came into the room. When did the company come in?"

"We closed in Yonkers last night."

"Good business?"

Evelyn shook her head.

"H'm!" said Mrs. Freeman. "There's been a lot of frosts this season. If things don't pick up, I don't know what's goin' to happen. Why, at one

time last winter there were eight hundred actors out of employment right here in New York."

"Well, next winter I'm afraid I shall be one of them if I don't get something pretty soon."

"Oh, you didn't sign with Wesley for next season, did you?" Mrs. Freeman ran her lead-pencil deep into her hair. "I remember now. I got Cora Reynolds for him. I have to keep track of so many companies and so many actors that I get 'em mixed sometimes. What's been the matter with you, anyway?" she suddenly asked, giving Evelyn a sharp glance. "Your press notices have gone off terribly."

"I haven't been very well," said Evelyn. Then, provoked with herself for making so apologetic a remark, she added, "I got sick of the part."

"I know the piece ain't much, but it goes. Seems to me only the bad things do go nowadays. So you're after something for next season. Leads, I suppose?"

"I'll take almost anything," Evelyn replied, des-

perately.

"Oh, it wouldn't do to work out of your line. Now there's Saunderson. He's looking for some people for his new play. You know 'Deception,' by Leonard Thayer, the feller that's made such a hit lately with his stories. It's his first play. They say it's great. Saunderson says he only wants the best people."

"I'm not good enough for Saunderson," said

Evelyn, wearily.

"It don't pay to be too modest in this business. If you could get in with Saunderson, you'd be in luck. It would mean New York all winter. The

piece is sure to go. Saunderson showed me the manuscript, and it was great — great! Even if it wasn't, the success of the book would make it draw. There's a part there that would just fit you."

"Who's he got?" Evelyn asked.

"I don't believe he's got any one yet."

"Is it the leading part?"

"No, it ain't. But I think it's better. I'd rather play it than the other one. Anyway, it's better to have the second part in a good New York company than leads in a second-rate road company."

"Who's going to have the leading part?"

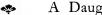
"Helen Gordon. Harry Davidson here's going to do the hero. Saunderson actually got him away from the Metropolitan. Saunderson ain't stoppin' at nothin'. Three-fifty a week. Think of that!"

"He is getting good people."

"It's a great chance for Gordon. She ain't appreciated in New York yet. By the way," Mrs. Freeman added, looking vaguely around the room, "she said she was coming to see about it this morning. She was tickled to death to get it. Well, you just leave your address with me. I s'pose you're off for home, ain't you? Something'll turn up before long, an' I'll let you know."

As Evelyn went down the steep flight of steps to the street, she met a lady, whose extravagantly ornamented summer dress, together with the coquettish tilt of her straw hat, at once revealed a member of her own profession. Evelyn did not recognise her till they had met face to face.

"Why, Evelyn! how do you do? I've just this minute been thinking of you. Been up at Mrs. Freeman's? You've heard of my engagement,



haven't you? Isn't it splendid? Come back for a minute, won't you? I'm dying to have a talk with vou."

Evelyn did not wish to go back to Mrs. Freeman's; she disliked the place, and she was averse to indulging in theatrical gossip with Helen Gordon. But a few moments later she stood again among the photographs. On seeing Miss Gordon, several of the young ladies shrieked, and Evelyn retired to a corner. For a few moments Helen Gordon conversed enthusiastically. Evelyn thought that that was one reason why she was so unpopular in the profession: she was too effusively insincere. She was very intelligent; her bright black eyes seemed fairly to radiate intelligence, and they made her plain features almost beautiful.

Miss Gordon presently returned to Evelyn. "I'm going to get my divorce," she exclaimed, dropping into a seat. "Yes, Judge Cowdrey, my lawyer, writes me that my case is so good there can't be any doubt about it; it's only a question of time. Oh, how that man has tried me! Jackson, I mean. He didn't want me to go on the stage in the first place; he said I'd disgrace him. Fancy! Disgrace him! But when he found I'd made a success, he tried to get all my salary. I was counting up the other day the money I'd given him during the nine years I've been acting. Sixty-seven hundred and thirty-five dollars. Think of that! My hard-earned money, and all the expense I was under! Well, how are you? So your engagement to Harold Seymour's broken! I was going to write to you, but you know how one feels about such things. But hasn't he been successful this winter,



though? They say he made a big hit in 'Over Jordan.' Well, it's all in a lifetime, and it is life, it's experience. Oh, I've had too much experience in my life, I sometimes think; but, after all, we only have one life to live, and I say let's live it." Miss Gordon paused, and looked into Evelyn's eyes. "Got anything for next season?"

"Not a thing."

"Oh, dear! I wish you were going to be with us. I've got the loveliest part. I haven't seen it vet, but Mrs. Freeman has told me about it. It's powerful. I'll show them what I can do. I knew my chance would come. Oh, if I could only tell you how that Edwards woman treated me this season. She was jealous of me, simply crazy. She cut down my part to the bone. It was everything for herself, and nothing for the rest of us. Why, she'd never even let us take a call. One night in Detroit I got a call. Of course, I didn't go on; I'd been told not to. I stood in the wings, just smiling to myself. But I was wild! Well, old Barlow - he manages the theatre - know him? - big, gruff voice — he came out, and he rushed up to me, and he said: 'Why don't you take that call?' I said: 'Mrs. Edwards doesn't allow the company to take calls,' just as cool. Then he swore. It was awful! And he said, 'You go out and take that call.' So out I went, and, oh, I wish you could have seen the reception I got. But wasn't she mad, though? She was in the wings when I came off, and she glared at me like a fiend. For three weeks she wouldn't speak to me. Just wait till I have a company of my own," Miss Gordon concluded. "I'll know enough to treat people decently."



Evelyn could scarcely keep from smiling. She thought she could foresee what would happen if Miss Gordon did have a company.

"She's all tricks, that woman is. She's got no more talent than that sign over there," Miss Gordon went on, pointing to a placard on the door that read, "All Engagements of Bradley & Stimson Are Made through Mrs. Freeman." "Her favourite trick is holding the stage just before her entrance. She does that in everything. It used to drive us nearly frantic. You know how awful it is to have to wait for any one right in the middle of a scene. She does it, of course, to get the audience all worked up watching for her, and then she bursts out on them. Sometimes her waits are nearly a quarter of a minute long. To us, that used to seem a century. And then she would never allow us to go within ten feet of the footlights, and she'd never, never let us take the centre. One night I just determined to pay her back. You know that scene in 'Mary Stuart' between Mary and Elizabeth? I played Elizabeth, of course. It's a fine chance for me. Well, it was in Detroit, the night after my row. I determined to clinch the success I'd made. So, just as I began my great speech, I took the centre. Oh, she was raving. 'Get back! get back!' she screamed under her breath. They must have heard her in front. But I wouldn't budge. She was almost frothing at the mouth when the curtain went down. She took the call alone, and the audience howled for me. But I didn't care. I'd had all I wanted. I just sailed into my dressing-room."

"It must have been horrid to be with her," Eve-



lyn permitted herself to remark, feeling that she was expected to be sympathetic.

"Oh, it was vile. How were your people?"

"All right, except Buckner."

"Yes, I once played with him. He's a tank. Wasn't Madge Guernsey with you? She's going to have a part in 'Deception,' I hear. Mrs. Freeman just told me."

"So she's got it, then?"

"As good as got it, I think, from what Mrs. Freeman said. But I don't believe she's engaged yet."

Miss Gordon started off again in a discussion of various members of the theatrical profession; some of them Evelyn knew either personally or by report, and others she had not even heard of. About nearly every one she had something critical to say, sometimes under the guise of praise, however. Evelyn finally became tired, and explained she really must say good-bye.

"So you're going to Boston? Oh, you live there, don't you? How I envy you! They appreciate me there. Mr. Webb, of the *Argus*, has written the loveliest things about me. Know him?"

Evelyn shook her head. "I've often seen him. He has a house at Cohasset."

"Well, some newspaper people I despise. But it always pays you to keep on the right side of them. Come and see me when you get back, won't you? I shall be at Staten Island till the first of August, and then I'll come back to the old place for rehearsals. You have the address, haven't you? Good-bye, dear; I hope you'll have a lovely summer."

VII.

In the afternoon, when Evelyn reached the Grand Central Station, she found Harold Seymour standing in the doorway.

"You didn't expect to see me here so early, did you?" he said with a smile, taking the bag from her hand. "I remembered your old trick of being an hour ahead of time."

She started toward the ticket-office. "I've got the tickets," he said, and, when he saw the look in her face, he laughed. "Oh, I expect you to pay for yours."

They took seats in the waiting-room.

"I've got everything," he said, after a moment's silence, — "the box of Huyler's and the novel. It's your favourite, Thayer's — his latest, just out."

"Thank you, but I don't believe I care for the Huyler's."

For a moment his face dropped. "All right, I'll eat it," he said.

In spite of herself she smiled.

"I know you hate candy. So I'll take it to save you the trouble."

"Did you know Thayer was going to have a play put on?"

"I've heard nothing else all the morning."

"They offered me leading business. Saunderson



wired me the other day. But I'd signed with Doddy again. So Harry Davidson got it. They say it's a great part."

When they entered the train, Evelyn found that Seymour had secured two seats on the shady side. He had forgotten nothing; he seemed to be trying to show her how thoughtful he could be. Before the train started, he helped to arrange her head comfortably, and he secured a foot-rest for her. Then he said:

"Now you can devote yourself to the novel. Don't mind me. I'm not going to bother you. I'm satisfied just to sit here and look at you."

For an hour she read persistently, scarcely realising the meaning of the words, however. She would have preferred to look out of the window; but she feared that Seymour would consider this an invitation to talk. Finally, she could not resist her desire to know what he was doing. She peered stealthily over the book. He was asleep.

He slept for an hour, so she was free to occupy herself as she chose. But she found it was not so pleasant to be alone as she had supposed; for being with a sleeping companion was the same as being alone. She looked out of the window, and every now and then she turned to see if he gave any sign of waking. He was not an impressive figure as he sat with his mouth open and his arms extended limply from the sides of the chair. He breathed heavily, and she was afraid he was going to snore. She felt humiliated; of course, the people in the car thought they were married. But she wouldn't wake him if she died for it.

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When he woke, he looked around sheepishly; then he flushed and rubbed his eyes.

"I beg your pardon, I must have been asleep. I wonder how long —"

She was looking away again.

He leaned toward her. "I say, that was a beastly rude thing of me to do. I'm awfully sorry." She kept her eyes fixed on the window. Then he whispered: "Did I — did I snore?"

"Yes, you did," she replied.

He sank back in his seat. Then he began to laugh. "It must be nearly dinner-time," he said, looking at his watch.

"I'm not hungry."

"Well, I am. I haven't had anything to eat since one o'clock."

"Since breakfast?"

"Yes, since breakfast."

Evelyn gathered her wraps and placed them in her seat. At the table she became more gracious; before dessert was reached, she had even consented to laugh at his jokes. He avoided dangerous topics, and amused her with an account of his season. The New York girls had made a matinée idol of him; some of them had written him love-letters, which he said he had burned; he quoted bits from them that were especially tender, and had stuck in his memory. Of course he wanted her to infer that, in spite of all this adulation, he was still devoted to her. He asked what her plans were for next season. They continued on this amiable basis till they reached Boston.

As they stood in front of the South Station, she



said, looking around: "How small and contracted Boston seems after New York."

"Yes, it's a quaint little place," he replied, patronisingly.

"It's better than New York, anyway. New York seems an inhuman city to me."

He laughed at the adjective, and said it was very womanish. After they entered the street-car, he grew quiet. He seemed to be planning something.

"I'm glad you let me come on," he said, in a low voice, so that the other passengers should not hear.

"I didn't let you come," she replied, quietly, steeling herself against the tone of his voice. "You came yourself."

"Well, I'm glad you didn't object."

"How could I? You're a free agent."

He smiled and turned to look out the window. "We're almost at School Street." He made a sign to the conductor, and a few moments later they stood in front of the Parker House. Now that the time had come for leaving him, she felt a sudden and an inexplicable tenderness for him.

He took her hand and held it for a moment.

"Good-night, little girl," he said.

VIII.

THE next morning, though the air was thick with fog, Evelyn decided to make the journey to Cohasset by one of the Nantasket Beach steamers, and to take the stage from Nantasket to Mrs. Appleby's boarding-house. She found few people in the boat. In the stern of the upper deck, where she took a seat, only two persons were sitting, a woman muffled in a heavy gray shawl, through the folds of which she could just catch a glimpse of a yellow face and restless black eyes, and a tall. athletic-looking man. The man she recognised at once as Oswald Webb, one of the editors of the Boston Argus. She had often seen him at Cohasset. His cottage was on the top of the hill that sloped to Mrs. Appleby's; it used to be pointed out to strangers, and a sketch of his history always went with it. He had been born in the West, and in early youth he had come to Boston to do literary work; his talent had quickly made a place for him, and he had married a girl of good Boston family. course, the Cohasset people had their gossip about him; one couldn't blame them; he was the most interesting man in the place, the nearest approach to a celebrity. Evelyn, however, did not believe the report that Oswald Webb's life was made miserable by the insane jealousy of his wife. There was kindliness in the face of the invalid, which denied the story. Mrs. Webb could not have been more than thirty-five, but her thin hair, her yellow skin, which clung in patches to the cheek-bones, and her purplish mouth, made her appear like an old woman. Evelyn saw her smile at something her husband had said, and the smile was very sweet and pathetic. She was speaking briskly; she seemed full of animation.

When the steamer began to plough the water into foam, and to turn its prow in the direction of the lower harbour, Evelyn heard Mrs. Webb exclaim with delight: "Oh, Oswald, isn't it lovely!"

He looked into her face and smiled. "I hope you won't be sorry for this to-morrow," he said.

"How beautiful the atmosphere is, all silver mist, with bits of yellow and blue in it. The sun is trying hard to come out, but I hope it won't. I'm glad it wasn't clear. The boat would have been crowded. I should have had to stay inside."

Presently Mrs. Webb burst out again: "It's ten years since I've come down on the boat. The harbour seems hardly changed. How good it is to see it all again. It's only people like me who can't see things that appreciate them when they do see them. Don't you remember the last time we came? We'd just been in to see Doctor Bond, and he'd said I was going to get well."

Webb bowed his head.

"But it wasn't true."

"No matter. Don't you remember how it cheered us up? There! There's Fort Independence. Isn't it beautiful? Everything seems beauti-



ful to me, everything, Oswald. You can't imagine how beautiful!"

"Don't you think you'd better put this shawl over your head again? I'm afraid you'll catch cold."

"Oh, no. I'm perfectly comfortable. Just let me lean my head here. This is real bliss."

Evelyn watched the invalid, as she sat drinking in with her eyes the pulsating water, where thousands of jelly-fishes were floating near the surface, and the stretches of land in the distance.

"That is Long Island Light there, isn't it?" Mrs. Webb asked, pointing with her thin, white hand. On one of the fingers was a wedding-ring, so large that it was held in place by a guard. "Do you remember the picnic we had there together? You wanted to write something about it. And don't you remember the funny time I had climbing up to the top, and how nervous I was, and how we laughed when we got there? Wasn't it a spider I saw hanging from the wall? I screamed awfully, and you and the old lighthouse-keeper made fun of me about it till we left the place. I wonder if he's there now. He wouldn't take the money I offered him, and I felt so ashamed."

As they passed the blackened walls of Nixie's Mate, which seemed like a miniature house of death floating on the water, Mrs. Webb exclaimed: "How ghastly that looks in the mist."

"It always looks ghastly."

"Why don't they blow it up, or destroy it in some way?"

"Oh, I don't know. It's a rather interesting relic."



"Isn't there some story connected with it—some horrid story?"

"Yes; a pirate or a criminal of some sort was hanged there. While he was on the gallows, he claimed that he was innocent, and to prove it, he prophesied that the water would swallow up the island. There was a good-sized island there at the time. You see, there isn't any now. At high tide it disappears."

"So he was innocent."

Webb laughed. "I suppose we ought to believe so. At any rate, he was clever."

"Oh, you think he knew that in course of time the water would wash away the island."

"Possibly. But I prefer the sentimental interpretation."

"So do I. But it's dreadful."

"At low tide there's still a strip of land there."

"But the prophecy is fulfilled."

"Oh, yes."

Evelyn turned to look at Nixie's Mate a second time. She had heard the story before, but the fresh recital gave it new interest for her. Suddenly she heard a cry. She looked quickly around, and saw that Mrs. Webb had fainted in her husband's arms. For a moment she was too startled to move. Then she hastened to the other side of the deck, where they were sitting. "Can't I help you?" she said.

Webb, whose face was almost as white as his wife's, looked up quickly. "Open the cabin door," he said.

It was a sliding door, and the dampness made it stick; but with an effort Evelyn succeeded in forcing it back. Webb lifted the limp figure, and,

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carrying it into the cabin, he placed it on the carpeted floor. Then he drew a flask from his pocket, and held it to the white lips.

Evelyn removed the thick shawl that the invalid had pinned around her, and passed it under her head. Several of the passengers began to gather.

"Won't you please go away?" said Webb. "This young lady will give me all the assistance I need. But if one of you will call the purser, I shall be much obliged."

A few of the passengers returned to their seats; the others simply fell back a few feet, and continued to watch the scene.

"It's nothing," said Webb to Evelyn, who stood looking helplessly at the prostrate figure. wife often has these attacks. All we can do is to wait till she comes out of it."

The purser quickly appeared and opened one of the staterooms near by. He helped Webb to carry the invalid into the room. Evelyn removed Mrs. Webb's hat, and arranged her comfortably in the berth. Her husband, still pale, looked on. "See," he said, "her eyelids are fluttering. She'll soon be better. It's wonderful how quickly she rallies."

For several moments Mrs. Webb lay perfectly still; but the look of death left her face. Evelyn glanced out of the stateroom window, and saw that they were approaching Hull; the boat touched at the landing, and speedily proceeded in the direction of Nantasket. The purser had brought in a palmleaf fan, and Webb was sitting by the side of the berth fanning his wife.



There seemed to be nothing more for Evelyn to do; so she said: "I think I will go now; but, if you want me again, I shall be outside."

Webb was so absorbed that he did not hear at once; but when she opened the door to go out, he replied: "Oh, yes; oh, yes! Thank you; thank you."

Evelyn took a seat near the stateroom, to be near in case she should be wanted. Then she remembered she had left her bag near the seat she had taken on deck. When she went out to get it, she discovered that it was gone!

For a moment she felt faint. Then the blood rushed to her head and began to thump in her temples. The bag contained her pocketbook, and in the pocketbook were two hundred dollars, her summer money. After looking carefully over the deck, she hurried down to the office of the purser, whom she found standing at the door. In a few words she told of her loss.

"Well, you ought not to have left it there," he said, with a pitying smile. Then he added, sententiously, "There are always thieves around."

Evelyn was bewildered by his coolness. "But what shall I do? There were two hundred dollars in the bag."

"He's in luck, whoever he is," said the purser, turning into his office. Then he asked carelessly, through the open window, "What's your name?"

When she had answered, he went on, "You see, since you left the bag, we've stopped at Hull, and the thief has probably left the boat. We can't examine every passenger on board, you know. But



I'll tell you what we can do. We can watch the passengers as they get off at Nantasket, and see if any one has the bag in his hand. But I'm afraid no thief would be crazy enough to walk off with it so publicly as that."

"What will he do, then?" said Evelyn, help-

lessly.

"Why," replied the purser, with a laugh, "he'll simply take the pocketbook, and, if he gets a chance, he'll drop the bag overboard. He could easily do that from the lower deck."

"Oh!"

"Sometimes they're more considerate, and leave what they don't want behind. So we may find the bag on the boat somewhere."

"But it's the pocketbook I care most about. He

can have the other things."

The purser laughed again. "We'll be at Nantasket in a few minutes, and perhaps you'd better stay here and watch out for the bag while the people are leaving. How's your invalid?"

At that moment Evelyn was not disposed to talk of anything but her pocketbook. In groping about for some one to expend her misery on, she felt tempted to blame the sick woman for her loss. She sat on a chair that the purser had provided, and she indulged her misery. She still had one hundred and fifty dollars in the bank; but she had hoped not to touch that; it was what she called her out-of-engagement money; she had relied upon it, if necessary, to meet her expenses during part of the winter.

As the passengers filed slowly out, she watched

them nervously. At the end of the procession Mrs. Webb appeared in her husband's arms; she was evidently conscious, for her eyes opened once. Webb passed close by. Evelyn saw him carry his wife up the gang-plank and lift her into a carriage.

IX.

The purser had despatched several of the deckhands to search for the bag, and soon after the passengers had left the boat one of them came back with it in his hand; he had found it behind a pile of camp-chairs in the saloon. Evelyn opened it quickly, and discovered that everything she had put into it was there, except the pocketbook. The purser himself, who stood by, promised to put the case in the hands of a detective; but he gave her little encouragement. "It is pretty hard to catch those fellows," he said, sympathetically.

Evelyn turned away with a miserable feeling of disappointment, without even thanking him or the man who had found the bag. But when she reached the gang-plank, she turned back; the man, however, had disappeared, and the purser had gone into his office and closed the door and the window.

As she stepped on the wharf, she saw that two of the barges that carried people up the Jerusalem Road were still waiting; but neither of the drivers had been there the year before; those she knew had whipped off with passengers. She approached the more respectable looking, and conscientiously informed him that she had lost her pocketbook, but if he would take her up to Appleby Terrace, she could borrow money there and pay him. He



grinned good-naturedly, said "All right," and opened the door. Her unhappiness prevented her from enjoying the ride up the road, though it gave her a fine view of the beach and the sea. had succeeded in breaking through the clouds and was burning up the mist, and she could hear the surging of the ocean on the sand.

"Appleby Terrace" was on the edge of the hill that ran down to the beach. It had a fine view of the sea. In the distance Minot's Light rose from its hidden ledge of rock; Evelyn had often seen the billows dash over it in the fierce summer hurricanes. Just why the house was called by the name it bore puzzled those who did not know Mrs. Fortescue Appleby; but those who did know her understood that it was simply one of her vagaries. In the first years of her married life, she had passed a few months in England, and there she had learned to love the word "terrace" for its aristocratic quality. So, when she took this cottage, she had resolved to give it this name, though there was nothing in the surroundings to make it appropriate. "Appleby Terrace" was printed in large letters on a hideous sign over the front piazza.

Mrs. Appleby herself was one of the characters of Cohasset. Every one knew her; every one laughed at her; every one respected her. In winter she kept a boarding-house for students in Cambridge, and from this enterprise, as well as from her house in Cohasset, she had an income that supported herself and her husband in comfort. at Cambridge, where her mother before her had kept a place for students, that she had met Fortescue Appleby. He had been sent to Harvard by

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a rich uncle, and had persistently idled through the four years of his course. At the end of this period, having received no degree, he returned for a fifth year of leisure. It was during this time that he secretly married the daughter of the lady to whom he owed several hundred dollars. After he secured his degree, — it was reported that the college had granted it to get rid of him, — he calmly announced his marriage. Then he continued the habits of gentlemanly repose acquired at college.

There was no one on the front piazza as the barge drew up at the door. But in a moment Mrs. Appleby, her portly figure clad in soiled blue-dotted calico, came bustling out from the back kitchen, where she spent her mornings. When she saw

Evelyn, she clapped her hands.

"Come right down here and let me kiss you." When she looked into Evelyn's face, she exclaimed, "Why, what in the world is the matter?"

"I've been robbed," Evelyn replied.

"Robbed!" Mrs. Appleby looked blank.

"Yes; some one stole my pocketbook on the boat. I haven't any money to pay the driver."

- "Oh, is that all?" Mrs. Appleby felt reassured. "I'll pay him." She thrust her arm into the folds of her dress. "How much was in the pocket-book?"
 - "Two hundred dollars!"
- "Two hundred *dollars!*" Mrs. Appleby drew her hand from her pocket without producing her purse.
 - "Say, hurry up there," yelled the stage-driver.
 "Oh!" Mrs. Appleby hastened to find twenty-
- "Oh!" Mrs. Appleby hastened to find twenty-five cents, which she gave to the man. "Well, I



declare," she said, as she walked back to the piazza, "if that ain't the most astonishing thing I ever heard in my life."

They went into the sitting-room, conventionally furnished with a piano, some wicker chairs, a few little pictures in oil, and draped here and there in yellow silk. Evelyn had to go over every detail of her loss, which, of course, included a reference to Mrs. Webb's illness. It was annoying to find that in Mrs. Appleby's mind the illness eclipsed the loss. For several minutes Mrs. Appleby ignored the pocketbook. How had Mrs. Webb happened to come out such a day as this? How had she looked before she fainted? How had she looked afterward? How was she dressed? And did Mr. Webb really seem to care? Some folks believed he was iust waiting for her to die, and by this time he must be losing patience; he had only married her for her money, anyway. And did he thank Evelvn for all she did? Mrs. Appleby was sure it was very kind of her. He said just that - just "Thank you, thank you?" In that tone? Well, that was strange. He was usually so polite, too polite, if anything; he went out of his way to be polite. Yes, he must have been excited. Poor man! She pitied him, to be tied to that sick creature. knew Mrs. Webb had a temper, and when she was in one of her jealous fits, there was no standing her. Wasn't it terrible? Such a handsome man, too.

It was not till Mrs. Appleby had thoroughly threshed the subject of the Webbs that she consented to return to Evelyn's misfortune. After adjusting her worldly wisdom to the matter, she quickly perceived that there was little hope of re-

covering the money. She only begged Evelyn not to let it spoil her summer, and, if she couldn't pay her board, why, it would be all right; she might pay when she could. Mrs. Appleby had a good heart, but her lack of tact had often been deplored by her husband. It was of this gentleman that Evelyn spoke before going up to her room.

"Oh, he's well," Mrs. Appleby sighed. "He is always well. Why shouldn't he be? He does nothing to hurt him. He's in bed now. You know he

never gets up till one o'clock?"

"Twelve, I thought," said Evelyn, with a smile. "It's been one for the last six months. He says

as he grows older he needs more sleep. It's been getting later and later every year. By and by he won't get up at all."

"Many people here?" Evelyn asked, as she started to go up the stairs. Mrs. Appleby had followed her into the hall.

"No, it's a little early. Mrs. Bowen's come. The Stearns boys will be down to-morrow."

"Is Mr. Bowen here, too?"

"No, he's gone to Europe, on business, as usual. She couldn't go. She was afraid of the voyage, poor thing. You know what skin and bone she is. She gets seasick coming down on the steamer."

"Yes, I know." Then Evelyn added, wearily, "I must go up. Has my trunk come? I hope that hasn't been stolen, too."

EVELYN was tempted to include in the luxury of self-pity and tears, and to pass the rest of the day in bed; but if she were to go to bed now, Mrs. Appleby would discuss her with the boarders, and the next day she would be beset with questions. The robbery, at any rate, would distract their minds for a time from her broken engagement. She had a horror of their eloquent avoidance of the topic and their searching looks of sympathy. Mrs. Bowen would speak of it, she knew; but Mrs. Bowen's touch was gentle. For a while Mrs. Appleby would make a show of saying nothing about it; then she would break out into irritating remarks.

As she entered the dining-room, she perceived that the story of her loss had preceded her. A few ladies were sitting at one of the small tables; those that she knew greeted her with smiles, and those that she didn't know, stared. Mrs. Bowen rose and kissed her affectionately. She was a small, frail woman, with a sharp, thin face, and with jet-black hair and eyes. She moved slowly, as if afraid of jarring her body.

"I've been counting the days till you'd come," she said. She pressed Evelyn's hand softly. "I've asked Mrs. Appleby to give you this seat," Mrs. Bowen went on, smiling and pointing to the chair

beside her. "Don't you remember? We sat together last year after Mr. Bowen went away." Then she leaned over and whispered: "I've heard all about the pocketbook; but we'll talk about that later."

After luncheon, Mrs. Bowen asked Evelyn to come into her room. It was the best room in the house, large, with three windows, two of which looked out on the ocean and led to a porch. Evelyn's room was on the top floor looking out on the hill; the sloping roof made it unbearably hot in the afternoon.

"You must come here every day after luncheon," said Mrs. Bowen, "just as you did last year, and in the morning, too, for that matter. We must keep each other company."

Her room was a reflection of herself, all sweetness, delicacy, and fantastic prettiness. Two birdcages hung by the windows that looked out on the sea, and in each a yellow canary hopped and swung. On all sides were books: in the little oaken bookcase that she had brought with her, on the tables, even on the mantelpiece. She loved books; but she only nibbled at them, like the canary-birds at their seed; long continued reading made her head and eyes ache. There were some etchings on the walls, and on the chairs foolish draperies of China silk, and everywhere, photographs. Pictures abounded of a man of thirty-five with a determined face and laughing eyes.

"It's just the same," said Evelyn, looking into one of the big rockers, and laying her head upon the silken rest. "It takes me back to last summer. I can almost imagine that nothing has happened



since." Then, after a moment's silence, she added: "No, I can't."

Then they opened their hearts to each other. Since the summer before they had not exchanged letters, and they went into each other's history with a passionate elaboration of detail. While Evelyn was giving Mrs. Bowen an account of her meeting with Harold Seymour in Yonkers, a servant entered with a card bearing the name of Mr. Oswald Webb.

Evelyn passed the card to Mrs. Bowen.

"Oh! he has come to thank you, of course. He has just realised how rude he was to you this morning, and he's come to apologise."

"But how could he know who I was?"

"Oh, you haven't been on the stage for nothing. You may be sure that everybody in Cohasset knows you've arrived."

"And do you really think he's come about that?"

"Of course he has. What else do you suppose he's come for?"

"I can't think of anything else that would bring him. Well, I might as well make up my mind to go down," sighed Evelyn.

"Make up your mind? I wish I had the chance

of meeting him."

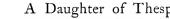
"You might see him for me. He didn't notice what I looked like."

"All right. That will be lovely. I've always wanted to know how it felt to be a great actress."

"I've wondered about that myself."

"My dear, you're too modest."

"Well, aren't you going down?" said Evelyn, smiling.



"I guess not," Mrs. Bowen replied, with a smile. "I couldn't get through the part. I'd break down. I'd forget my lines."

"I can't go in this dress," said Evelyn, rising and hesitating before the mirror.

Mrs. Bowen stood facing Evelyn. "I tell you what I'll do," she said, after a moment's silence, "I'll go down and tell him you're coming in a minute. I think I've got just wit enough to keep him from being bored till vou're ready."

They parted at the door, Evelyn hastening upstairs with the flowers in her hand, and Mrs. Bowen walking slowly down, laughing with nervous gaiety at her own boldness.

A quarter of an hour later Evelyn entered the parlour. She found Mrs. Bowen and Oswald Webb talking animatedly. Webb, without waiting to be introduced, approached her with long strides and offered his hand.

"I owe you a thousand apologies," he said, beaming down upon her. "I was very rude to you this morning, and I must have seemed ungrateful for what you did for my poor wife and myself. I was so upset I didn't think of thanking you." He flushed, as if he felt that his speech had been too long and effusive, and Evelvn withdrew her hand, which he had unconsciously held.

"What I did was nothing," she said. "Any one would have done it."

"We've been talking about you ever since we got home," he said, taking his seat again. Mrs. Bowen was smiling deprecatingly, as if she felt she ought not to be there, but as she was there, she would try to be as amiable and as silent as



possible. "Mrs. Webb recovers very quickly from those attacks."

"I hope she doesn't have them very often," said Evelyn.

Mrs. Bowen's face assumed a grave harmony with the subject.

"She ought not to have come out to-day; but she had been feeling unusually well, and we'd planned to take the boat if it was pleasant. Then she was so disappointed when the weather turned out to be disagreeable, that I let her come in spite of it."

For a moment there was an awkward silence.

"We had been talking about you," said Webb, irrelevantly.

"Had you, really?" said Evelyn, flushing.

Mrs. Bowen smiled brightly.

"Yes, we thought we had seen you before. We felt sure of it. We said if we hadn't seen you, we had seen some one just like you. Then after I told Mrs. Webb all you'd done for her, she was anxious to find out where we'd seen you. She sees so few people, you know, and she has a wonderful memory for faces."

"How did you find out?" asked Evelyn.

"It flashed upon us just a little while ago — or, rather, it flashed on Constance, Mrs. Webb. We'd got ourselves very much excited over it, and she had given me a scolding for being so rude to you. I had confessed everything. I don't dare to keep anything from her, she's so sharp. Well, after she'd told me that we must find out who you were, and I must come and apologise to you, we remembered at last where we had seen you."



Mrs. Bowen laughed gleefully, as if she knew what was coming. "Where was it?" Evelyn asked.

"Mrs. Webb asked me," he went on, as if he hadn't heard the question, "if I remembered the night we had gone to see Booth in 'Don Cæsar.' Mrs. Webb is devoted to the theatre and so am I; but we're able to go so seldom that I can easily remember everything we see. Then she said, 'Don't you remember that we both liked some one very much in the play, some one besides Booth himself?' At that, all came back to me."

Mrs. Bowen burst out laughing, and Oswald Webb sat with his hands on his knees and smiled into Evelyn's eyes. Her face had turned scarlet. And yet in "Don Cæsar de Bazan" she had made the only real hit of her career in Boston.

Mrs. Bowen felt called upon to speak.

"Miss Johnson didn't like that part," she said, with one of her little smiles.

"Really?" Webb turned to Evelyn. "We thought you were charming in it."

"But the costume," Mrs. Bowen insisted, "she objected to the costume."

"The costume seemed very pretty to me," said Webb, innocently, "and very becoming." A moment later a curious expression appeared in his face, and he said: "Oh!"

Both Mrs. Bowen and Evelyn broke out into laughter.

"But one doesn't mind on the stage," Webb said, speaking from the point of view of the spectator. "I mean," he explained, in confusion, "that in such a play and such a part the audience never think—



never think of the — " He stopped helplessly, and Mrs. Bowen came to the rescue.

"Never think of the person playing it. I'm sure Mr. Webb is quite right, dear. Besides, it was a boy's part, you know."

Webb gave her a grateful look. "That's what I — what I tried to say," he stammered.

Mrs. Bowen, who began to wonder what would have happened if she had not come down, proceeded to assert herself.

"It was a great compliment for you and Mrs. Webb to remember Miss Johnson, I think," she said, in her half-whisper, "and when Booth was playing, too."

"Oh, we've often talked about it since, Mrs. Webb and I. You see, we never forgot Miss Johnson's face. We've often wondered who you were and where you came from and where you had gone, and all that. But we thought you must be very much younger — a mere child," he added, with a laugh.

"We're all young when we're on the stage," said Evelyn.

"Isn't it lovely? It seems like fairyland to me," said Mrs. Bowen.

Evelyn wished that they would change the subject. Such talk might please a successful actress, sure of her talent, but it only made her uncomfortable. There was no suggestion of fairyland in being out of an engagement. Mrs. Bowen, with her tact, led the subject into another channel.

"Mrs. Webb must have a wonderful memory," she said, referring back to Webb's allusion.

"It is, it is wonderful, really wonderful!" he

replied, delighted at being provided with a topic. "Invalids sometimes do have exceedingly keen minds. You see, they think so much; that's what is the matter with so many of them. In fact, that's what's the matter with my wife, with Mrs. Webb. She can't rest; her brain is always working." Another awkward pause followed. "You will come and see Mrs. Webb, won't you?" he said, abruptly, turning first to Evelyn, and then vaguely including Mrs. Bowen in his glance.

Evelyn looked a little startled; but she said she should be delighted. Mrs. Bowen just smiled.

"We don't see many people. We have to be quiet. Mrs. Webb can't bear much talk. But she takes fancies. She has taken a fancy to you, I think."

"That is very kind of her," said Evelyn, with a little smile and blush.

"She has been weaving romances about you all the afternoon. She has a wonderful imagination. I must warn you, if you come, she'll find out all your She'll be awfully disappointed if you haven't a romance in your life. She says she knows you have had a great many."

"You must make up some, dear," said Mrs. Bowen.

"Yes, that's what I do. Of course she finds it out - she always does. She says I tell her my novels instead of writing them."

"I have read those you have written," said Mrs. Bowen, eagerly. "I think they're lovely!"

"Oh, do you like them?" he asked, as if this were the first time he had ever heard them praised. "I'm very glad. It seems so far away now — since



I wrote them. I feel as if I hadn't written them at all, as if some one else had written them. I was very young then. Sometimes I think I couldn't do it now. I'm sure I couldn't do anything just like them."

"Oh, I am sure you could do something even better," said Mrs. Bowen. "You've had so much more experience."

Evelyn was almost shocked at the familiarity of Mrs. Bowen's manner. But it seemed to please Webb.

"Yes," he said, "I've had experience enough. I've been living a novel. Sometimes that is much harder than writing one."

"Oh, yes, I have thought of that. I have thought of that," said Mrs. Bowen. "We're all novels, every one of us. Don't you think so?"

"Yes. If we were put into a story just as we are, they would make most interesting books."

"Only people would say they weren't natural," whispered Mrs. Bowen.

"Yes," he said, with a smile. "How well you understand it! Do you write?"

"Oh, no," she replied, flushing with delight and embarrassment. "I only appreciate. There must be some to appreciate. And I observe and think, that's all."

"That is a great deal," said Webb. "Few do it."

"Ah, but if I could write, sometimes I think I should have things to say."

"It's largely a matter of habit — writing," he said, carelessly.

"Do you think so? Do you think it can be acquired — such a gift?"



"Of course the germ must be there — the intelligence and some faculty for expressing one's self. They can be developed by practice."

"My husband says I write beautiful letters," said

Mrs. Bowen.

"Letter-writing is a gift, too." Webb seemed bored. Evelyn suspected that he wished to get away from the subject of Mrs. Bowen's embryonic genius."

"But you will write, you will write more, won't

you?" Mrs. Bowen asked.

"Oh, perhaps, if I feel the impulse. But I have no spur. One needs a sharp spur. It's hard to buckle down to writing; the concentration is so great. Besides, as I grow older I feel a self-consciousness, a self-distrust that keeps me back. I doubt if I could now."

"Oh, you mustn't let this feeling come over you," exclaimed Mrs. Bowen. "I know what it is; I have felt it. Once I fought against it; but I couldn't keep it up. You must fight always; it's so insidious. It's like paralysis."

Evelyn wondered if her friend had taken leave of her senses.

For a moment Webb looked surprised. "You are right," he said. Then, after a pause, he went on: "I suppose every one has to struggle against it. It's those who struggle hardest and longest that succeed."

"Yes, it's keeping it up; it's keeping it up," murmured Mrs. Bowen.

Webb's eyes fixed upon her. She seemed flustered. "You will come, too, won't you?" he asked. She made a polite acknowledgment of the invita-



tion. "I'm sure Mrs. Webb will like you," he added. He sat for a few moments looking absently out of the window. "Will you come to-morrow?" he asked, turning to both of them.

Mrs. Bowen made a little gesture, and exchanged glances with Evelyn.

"She's very impatient. Invalids are apt to be, don't you think so? She wanted Miss Johnson to-day; she asked me to bring her back, but I told her it would be impossible, and I promised to do my best to have her come to-morrow. You will both come, won't you?" He rose from his seat and looked at them as if he were asking a great favour; then he offered his hand to Mrs. Bowen and to Evelyn. "You won't forget?" he said, turning at the door. "And will you come early? We don't have many visitors. It will be an event for us."

As the front door closed behind him, Mrs. Bowen turned to Evelyn, and, clasping her hands, she cried: "Isn't he just perfect?"

XI.

In the evening Evelyn spent a brief time with the other boarders in the sitting-room. The summer before she had amused them by playing and singing; she had a pretty voice, a light soprano, just strong enough to enable her to sing on the stage when her part required singing. Mr. Appleby appeared for a few moments; he never ate and rarely mingled with the boarders; but he had an admiration for Evelyn, which he occasionally showed by delicate His life was solitary; he had no intimates. Every Sunday afternoon at four o'clock Mrs. Appleby, dressed in black silk and white lace, with an enormous cameo at her throat, would go with him for a walk along Nantasket Beach; she still took a pride in him, and she liked to be seen in public with him. Indeed, she was the only companion that ever was seen with him outside her own house. There was a mystery about him that often piqued the curiosity of the boarders, especially the vounger and the more irreverent; they wondered what he did with himself during his prolonged disappearances.

This evening Appleby asked Evelyn about her season, if she had enjoyed it, if the old part had not grown tiresome, and other questions showing a friendly interest. Then, noticing the copy of "Deception" in her hand, he spoke of the play



Leonard Thayer was to produce. He had a great admiration for Thayer. While at Harvard Thayer had boarded for a few months at Mrs. Appleby's. Even then he had given signs of uncommon ability: Mr. Appleby deplored the tone of his later books; there was a hardness in them that he did not like, as if Thayer were becoming a bit cynical. In his early youth - it was nearly ten years since he had left college — he had been singularly optimistic and genial. Mr. Appleby was not surprised that Thayer was turning his attention to the stage; he had always been fond of the theatre. It was a pity that more literary men didn't try dramatic work, that is, the men of real talent; in the old days literature and play-writing had seemed to go hand in hand; indeed, play-writing had been in several periods, notably in the classical times, the chief form of literature; but now the two were cut off from each other; what was good literature often made a bad play, and a good play was often made bad literature; there certainly must be something false in our taste. Mr. Appleby uttered these sentiments with a charming naïveté; his manner was the refinement of simplicity; he never dogmatised; at times he went so far as to seem to deprecate his own arguments; one could not imagine him in the heat of discussion; he would always have the air of trying to help his opponent out. Occasionally, as he talked, he would smile faintly, showing an upper row of gleaming false teeth. He rarely gesticulated, and then from the right wrist only, which gave play to a white hand with long, tapering fingers.

In the midst of the talk Mrs. Appleby appeared, panting from her climb up the hill. She wore her

faded blue calico, half-covered with a gray shawl; on her head rested a man's yachting cap, the property of a former boarder, which had been left the year before on the rack in the hall. Her appearance was uncompromisingly Amazonian, and her husband fled before it.

"Same as ever, ain't he?" she said, nodding her head in the direction of the retreating patentleathers.

"He hasn't changed," Evelyn acknowledged.

"Well, if he ain't the greatest!" Mrs. Appleby sank into a chair without removing the cap or the shawl. "I've never seen any one like him, and I never expect to see another! He's delighted because you've come. He says you and Mrs. Bowen are the only intelligent people in the house."

Mrs. Appleby broke into a loud laugh.

"I don't wonder he likes Mrs. Bowen," said Evelyn. "Everybody does."

"Oh, she's nice enough. But she thinks more of a dollar than you or I do of a dime." Mrs. Appleby took off her cap and began to fan herself with it. "Ain't it hot?"

"I don't feel it."

"Oh, you thin folks never do."

Mrs. Appleby rose and swept out of the room; she was so restless that she never could remain long in the same place. Evelyn sat for a few minutes at the piano where she had been playing. Mrs. Bowen, who always went to bed at nine o'clock, had disappeared, and the other boarders were in their rooms or out walking. There was an oppressive silence over the place; from the beach could be heard the mournful surging of the waves. Evelyn sat for



a long time with one hand on the keyboard. She wondered what was going to happen. She had thought everything was over between Harold Seymour and herself; now he had forced himself in her way again. Why could he not have left her in peace? But she knew that she was trying to deceive herself again. Without him there could be no possible happiness — only the horrible monotony of the past six months.

She thought she heard a quick step on the gravel path that led from the Jerusalem Road to the porch. She listened, and then had a sickly feeling of disappointment. Yes, there it was again; some one was coming toward the house. She sat up quickly and began to play. She heard the footsteps pass from the walk to the piazza and stop beside the window. Then she saw Harold Seymour's shadow.

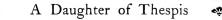
When she finished playing there was silence for a moment, and she rested her fingers on the keyboard. She heard a light tap on the window. She did not move. Another tap followed, louder than the first, then another and another. She went to the window, pulled down the shade, which thereupon sprang out of her hand and up to the roller, and she saw Seymour smiling before her. She looked at him for a moment; then she said: "Good evening."

"Won't you open the window? I want to speak to you."

"The front door is unlocked."

He turned away with a laugh and came in by the door. "You're not very romantic," he said, offering his hand.

"What has brought you?" she asked.



"You aren't giving me a very warm welcome," he replied, with a smile. "Especially as I have come on a purely philanthropic errand."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. But first tell me how you are, won't you?"

"I am well."

"All alone?"

" Yes."

He looked at her admiringly. "Those flowers are very pretty. And that pretty blue gown. You used to wear it last year. Have you been having a reception?" he asked, jokingly. Then he added: "I really have come down for something."

"Indeed?"

"I mean for something besides just seeing you. I wanted to do that bad enough, but I didn't dare till—"

" Well — "

"Till I found the excuse — that's all."

"Oh!"

"I've heard about — about that Webb woman and how you happened to lose your pocketbook."

"How did you hear?"

"Saw it in the evening paper, of course."

Her face became scarlet. She was thinking of Oswald Webb. He would see the paper, too. Perhaps he had seen it already.

"Did it say much?"

"No. Just a paragraph. Nice little advertisement for you."

She turned away impatiently.

"Excuse me. I said that just because I felt



foolish. I'm sorry it happened. I came to tell you that."

"Thank you."

"I suppose you'd be insulted if I offered to lend you money."

She shook her head, and before she could reply he went on: "Oh, I haven't offered, you know."

"It was very kind of you to come down," she said, quietly.

"Now you make me glad I came."

"And I—I don't need the money. That is, I have enough for the present."

She turned her head away to hide her tears.

"Then it's all right," he said, cheerfully. "Besides, you may get the money back. I'll speak to my friend Captain McManus about it. He's one of the best detectives in Boston."

"Oh, I know I'll never get it back," she broke out. "It's just my luck."

"I wouldn't feel so sure about that," he said, gently.

He picked up his hat which had fallen from the table to the floor and started for the front porch. She followed and they stood together in the darkness.

"It feels like three o'clock in the morning here, doesn't it? It's just the place for me after my life in New York."

She did not reply.

"Good-bye," he said.

"Good-bye." She offered him her hand.

He held her hand for a moment. Then he dropped it quickly, and plunged down the path.

XII.

THE next day Mrs. Bowen, who was usually subdued, showed considerable agitation at the prospect of her call on Mrs. Webb. If the weather continued pleasant — it looked a little like rain — she would wear her yellow and white organdie. If it clouded, she would put on her fawn-coloured cloth. That always looked well. And what would Evelyn wear? Her blue again? Oh, no, that simple white muslin with the little purple flowers in it would be ever so much more fetching. It wasn't a bit theatrical — and it would be sure to please Mrs. Webb, and take her husband's eye, too. She hoped he would talk more about literature and about the drama. Perhaps he would tell them how he happened to take up writing; she felt so encouraged by what he had said about the possibility of developing talent; she intended to try and see if she couldn't do something, perhaps a story in the form of letters; that would suit her best; of course she would begin on small things first, and then, perhaps, she would undertake a novel. So many women had succeeded in novel-writing lately.

"If I do write and get my things published, I shall sign my own name," said Mrs. Bowen. "I sha'n't sail under false pretences."

Occasionally they would turn from the Webbs to



the subject of the lost pocketbook. Evelyn had written a full description of it for the steamboat company. But what could the company do? Her only hope lay in the detective Mr. Seymour had spoken of.

Before luncheon Mrs. Bowen dressed for the call, and at the table she was in a little flutter of excitement. "Not ready to go?" she said, with a look of disappointment when she found Evelyn wearing the same gown that she had worn all the morning.

"No," Evelyn replied, "I thought I'd dress after luncheon. There's plenty of time."

When they were ready to start, Mrs. Bowen exclaimed: "Isn't it exciting?" The cottage of the Webbs was situated at some distance from Appleby Terrace. As the day had grown warm, the two ladies, poorly protected by their thin but picturesque parasols, walked very slowly. But when they approached the house they were thoroughly tired and out of breath. The house, though there were no trees around it, looked cool, perhaps on account of the dark wood of which it was built. The windows were protected with heavy awnings.

"Isn't it lovely?" cried Mrs. Bowen, enthusiastically. "And to think that poor woman can't enjoy it!"

"Oh, she probably does enjoy it," Evelyn replied,

panting.

"I wonder if she'll be under the influence of chloral this afternoon."

"I hope not."

"She'll probably be very stupid if she isn't."

Mrs. Bowen's exercise seemed to have the effect of



quickening her faculties, for she was unusually decided in her manner and speech.

"She must have been under the influence of the chloral yesterday," she went on, clinging desperately to her skirts with her right hand and gasping for breath as she mounted the top of the hill.

"What makes you think so?"

"Why, don't you remember how you described her eyes? Those were regular chloral eyes. Oh, I'm so tired."

"They were very bright."

"I thought of that when you told me about them; but I didn't like to speak of it."

They were at the foot of the broad flight of steps that led to the front door. "You ring, dear," said Mrs. Bowen, with a little tremor in her voice.

Evelyn pressed the electric bell. In a moment a white-capped servant appeared before them. When Mrs. Bowen asked for Mrs. Webb the woman seemed confused.

"She — she ain't been well this mornin', ma'am. She's had one of her bad spells."

"Perhaps we'd better leave cards and go away," said Evelyn.

Mrs. Bowen hesitated; a look of disappointment appeared in her face. She began, however, to finger in her card-case. Then the servant said:

"Well, p'raps ye'd better come in. I'll go 'n' ask Mr. Webb if she's able to come down."

A gleam of hope appeared in Mrs. Bowen's face, and she entered the broad hall, followed by Evelyn. The heavy door closed quietly behind them. They found themselves in a cool atmosphere, wonderfully refreshing after their walk.



"Will you come inter the lib'ry?" said the maid, leading the way across the tile-floor to one of the several rooms that led from the hall.

It was a large semicircular room lined with low mahogany bookcases, and upholstered in dark leather. The walls were covered with dull red cartridge-paper, and with a few etchings and portraits of literary celebrities. Upon the bookcases stood some classic heads in marble. On both Evelyn and Mrs. Bowen had fallen that subdued silence which comes to those who enter for the first time a strange and impressive place. Mrs. Bowen, whose emotions, being largely on the surface, were always seeking expression, was the first to speak.

"Isn't it just what you'd expect?" she whispered. "I should like to spend my whole life right here, right here in this room — with these books and all these lovely things. I don't see how any one could help writing here," she added, as she glanced at the big table near one of the windows. "I suppose he writes his novels there. Isn't it wonderful?"

"He doesn't write novels any more," said Evelyn. "He hasn't written one for years and years."

"What a shame! I should think his wife would make him. I'd make my husband write if he had the talent. I'd lock him up. But I suppose she's too delicate."

Evelyn smiled. "Do you think an author could do anything like that — under compulsion?"

"Of course, he would. These geniuses have to be forced to work. I've always heard they were awfully lazy. They can't realise what treasures are in their brains waiting to come out. That's what A Daughter of Thespis 🧇

their wives are for — to make them work. It must be grand to be the wife of a genius."

"I've read that it isn't. Think of Carlyle and

his wife."

"Oh, but she was a genius, too. The wife of a genius never ought to be a genius herself. She ought to be very practical."

"I once knew a woman whose husband was a genius, or rather she thought he was," Evelyn said, with a faintly satirical smile. "She used to tell me it depressed her awfully at times."

"Depressed her! How ridiculous! Why did

it depress her?"

"Because she couldn't do anything herself. She was always wanting to be something, but she couldn't. She said his genius made her seem mean and small."

"How selfish!"

"She wasn't," said Evelyn, absently. At times, Mrs. Bowen's philosophy did not interest her. "She was always making sacrifices for him."

"Now, I should be proud if my husband were a genius. I'd just slave for him, and I'd make him work and work and work. And then I'd be praised in his biography. People would say it was all due to me."

They heard voices from up-stairs. Instinctively they both listened. The peevish talk of a woman was followed by a deep murmur that sounded like a man's voice speaking in protest. Then the shrill tones asserted themselves again.

"Now you needn't try to stop me. I've made up

my mind."

The low protesting murmur followed again.



Mrs. Bowen and Evelyn exchanged glances of consternation.

"Stop, Oswald," the shrill voice resumed. "Don't you think I'm old enough to know my own mind? I'm ever so much better, and I shall feel all right just as soon as I take my medicine. Do you intend to give me that medicine?"

Mrs. Bowen looked at Evelyn with a gleam in her eyes that said, "I told you so!" Both were frightened.

"I'm sorry we came," whispered Evelyn. "I wish we could steal out by the front door."

"Now that we are here we must stay," said Mrs. Bowen, with a secret joy over the possibilities of the situation. She would fairly revel in writing an account of it to her husband.

There was silence for a few moments. The visitors tacitly agreed not to speak. Finally the sharp voice shot down the stairs this command:

"Mrs. Bell, please bring me a glass."

Then followed a low hum of voices; several persons seemed to be talking at once. Silence followed. A few moments later a heavy step began to descend the stairs. Mrs. Bowen straightened herself up and tried to assume the vacant air of the polite caller; Evelyn's face grew hot, and she felt as if she were about to be detected in the act of eavesdropping.

XIII.

OSWALD WEBB looked haggard when he entered the room. As he shook hands with his callers he said it was very good of them to climb the hill on such a hot day. And had the maid given them a glass of lemonade? No? That was thoughtless of her; they always kept some iced lemonade in the hall. But they would have some wine instead. That would be better. No, Mrs. Bowen didn't take wine? What a pity! But Miss Johnson would? She would prefer lemonade? Of course, of course, it was cooling in summer. He would bring it in himself.

He acted as if he was trying to hide his excitement by talking. Hurrying out into the hall, he came back with a large silver tankard covered with fine moisture.

"Ah, we haven't any glasses." He placed the tankard on the table and pressed the electric button.

"Mrs. Webb will be down presently," he went on, rapidly. "No, she hasn't been quite as well as usual. She's still suffering from the effects of that reckless trip. It's my fault, too; I ought not to have allowed it. But she's better — ever so much better, and she'll be delighted to see you. It was ever so good of you to come. We have thought — that is, I did; Mrs. Webb wouldn't give up hope

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— that the heat might keep you at home. Margaret, won't you bring some glasses, please? But she's much better — ever so much better. This morning she was a little down; she has those melancholy turns — always when the weather is bad. Isn't it curious? Ah, there's nothing like health." He had been glancing vaguely at Evelyn as he rattled off these remarks. Then he suddenly turned to Mrs. Bowen, who was looking at him, with a half-pitying expression: "I hope your health is excellent, Mrs. Bowen."

Her face grew red, then pale. "Oh, very good, very good," she stammered. "Except for a little, just a little heart-trouble." Heart-trouble was one of her favourite topics.

"Ah, do you have that? Mrs. Webb has had some — some difficulty in that way. It must have been very trying for you to climb the hill."

"Oh, no, it isn't so bad as that," laughed Mrs. Bowen, fibbing in her nervousness, for hills were the especial abhorrence of her summer life.

"It is a pretty high hill. But it is very pleasant when you get to the top. Put the glasses on the table, Margaret. Thanks. Have you noticed the view? But you'll have some lemonade first. It was thoughtless of the girl not to give you some. And she didn't give you fans either. Yes, it is cool here. We keep the house shut up most of the day. But we have a lot of palm-leaf fans round somewhere if you should care for them."

His hands trembled as he poured the lemonade into the glasses. Mrs. Bowen, who was watching him closely, gathering details, wondered how a man so healthy and strong could be so nervous; even if he had been excited by that scene with his wife his tact ought to enable him to control himself. Evelyn wished that Mrs. Bowen would stop staring; of course, he knew she was staring and that made him the more self-conscious.

"I hope it's sweet enough," he said, as he passed the glasses to them. "If it isn't, we can have some more sugar."

"It's lovely," said Mrs. Bowen, sipping it, "just right." Then when she had drained the glass, she said: "Oh, it's so good!"

"Won't you let me give you —" said Webb, excitedly.

She shook her head, and she touched her lips with her handkerchief.

"Miss Johnson?"

But Evelyn shook her head too.

"Then," he said, lifting the lid and looking into the pitcher, "I'll drink the rest myself." When he had drained a glass, he said, with a smile: "I don't often indulge in lemonade."

"It is a lady's drink," Mrs. Bowen echoed.

They seemed suddenly to have exhausted their small talk.

"Oh, I promised to show you the view," Webb exclaimed, jumping up from his seat. "Come out on the side piazza. The best view is from there."

They followed him to the next room. It seemed to be a kind of sitting-room, and with its pillows, its bric-à-brac, and its frivolous ornamentation, it had a feminine air. He opened one of the windows that reached to the ground, threw back the blinds, and stepped out. Beneath them lay Cohasset with its picturesque cottages half-hidden in the trees,



beyond which stretched the ocean. A cool breeze was stirring.

"There's almost always a breeze here," said Webb, "even when it's hottest. We're up so high, you know. This is my wife's balcony and sitting-room. I'm allowed here only by special favour. When she's well she sits here from morning till night doing her fancy work and her painting."

"Ah, she paints, then?" said Mrs. Bowen, her

eyes brightening.

"Yes, she has a very pretty talent. I'll show you some of her pictures when we go in."

They uttered the usual exclamations over the view; that is, Mrs. Bowen uttered them for both. When they returned to the sitting-room, Webb showed them some of his wife's pictures. Even Mrs. Bowen seemed appalled by them; her enraptured flow ceased. Evelyn wondered whether Mr. Webb really believed that his wife did have a "pretty talent."

While they were lingering over the pictures, they heard a rustle on the stairs, and in a moment Mrs. Webb appeared in the room. Evelyn saw her husband give her a keen look, which seemed to relieve him. Mrs. Webb greeted them cordially. She didn't even stop to be introduced.

"You're the dear creature who was so good to me yesterday," she said, taking both Evelyn's hands. "You must let me kiss you." Her eyes shone, and there was a faint tinge of colour in her haggard cheeks. "I am so grateful. I can't tell you how grateful." Then she turned to Mrs. Bowen, and said, offering her hand: "And I'm very glad to

see you too. I know all about you. Mr. Webb has told me."

They presently went back to the library. Mrs. Webb showed an even greater desire to talk than her husband had done. He soon turned to Mrs. Bowen, leaving Evelyn to his wife. Mrs. Webb had a high nasal voice that rang through the room, and a nervous, rasping laugh. Her frail body seemed to be galvanised into life by a fierce will, shown in her quick movements, in her voice, in her manner of speaking, in her flashing glances. She asked Evelyn all kinds of questions, chiefly about her stage life. Didn't she love it? No? How strange! She thought all actresses loved it, and hated to give it up; they were always going back to it. But those were the successful ones. Miss Johnson was too modest. Oh, it must be glorious, the excitement, the applause, the lights! Mrs. Webb loved excitement. She would like to live in it. Wasn't it cruel that one with such a temperament as hers should be so afflicted? Her life was a living death. And sometimes the pain, the pain was terrible. She had prayed and prayed for death. Of course, she didn't really want to die; life was sweet, and she never gave up hope. Once she had been cruelly deceived by a physician; he had promised to cure her; she had been so happy for months, living on hope, making plans — such beautiful plans — for travel and a great many other delightful things. She had everything that money could buy. But it couldn't buy health. Oh, she would give all she had willingly, gladly, for one year of health. Her husband cared for nothing but books; he was always happy if he had books around him. Of course, he was



good to her; but she was a wreck, a mere wreck. Did Miss Johnson think he was handsome? Sometimes she was very jealous. It was foolish, but how could she help it? Oh, it was cruel, it was cruel, the irony of her fate! It was cruel!

In the midst of Mrs. Webb's monologue — it was really a monologue interrupted only now and then by Evelyn's polite confirmations — Mrs. Bowen could be heard in rhapsodical exclamations. She was discussing literature again, confiding to Webb her intention of undertaking a "work." Something that she said had made Webb refer to a book in his wife's collection, and before Mrs. Webb had paused in the recital of her woes, he had led Mrs. Bowen into the next room. Mrs. Webb seemed relieved.

"I don't like your friend," she said, tersely, snapping her teeth together.

"Don't you?" said Evelyn, in surprise. Then, thinking the remark due to an invalid's excusable vagaries, she added, politely: "I'm sure you'd like her if you knew her better."

"I'm sure I should not." The teeth snapped again. "My first impressions are always right. Sickness may not have strengthened my brain, but it has sharpened my instinct. Invalids get to be very like animals."

"Oh, really —"

"Like fine animals, I mean, like high-bred dogs, hunting-dogs."

"But, why don't you like Mrs. Bowen, Mrs. Webb?"

"She's reportorial."

"Reportorial?"

"Yes. She repeats. She takes in everything

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with those little eyes of hers, and when she goes home she'll tell it all to her husband. They're always their husbands' slaves — those women are. I hate repeating women. The world is full of them. If they'd stop their repeating with their husbands, 'twouldn't be so bad. But they repeat to other people, too, to other repeaters, other women. She's just as sly! I can tell!"

"Oh, I'm sure you misjudge her," Evelyn insisted, with a strange impulse to laugh.

"What do you suppose she's doing in there with my husband?" Mrs. Webb asked, sharply.

"I don't know — looking at some books, I suppose. She's fond of books." Evelyn was beginning to feel queer.

"As if there weren't books enough here! Why couldn't she look at these?"

Mrs. Webb sat back in her chair and half-closed her eyes. She was evidently tired. Evelyn wished that Mrs. Bowen would come back so that they might go home. Presently the invalid opened her eyes and sat up again.

"I like you," she said, shaking her head emphatically.

Evelyn's face betrayed her confusion.

"You're honest. You're not a bit sly. You can be trusted."

"Thank you," said Evelyn, with a nervous laugh.

Mrs. Bowen returned to the room, followed by Webb. "Mrs. Bowen has just told me about the loss of your pocketbook," said Webb. "She thought I knew of it." Then he turned to his wife and explained.

"Two hundred dollars!" Mrs. Webb exclaimed,



horror-stricken. "You poor child, and my fault, too."

"Oh, no!" Evelyn expostulated.

"It might have happened anyway," said Mrs. Bowen, to relieve the tension.

"Sometimes I think I was sent to make trouble in the world," said Mrs. Webb, mournfully.

Evelyn rose, and Mrs. Bowen, who was prepared for a much longer sitting, had to follow her example.

"I'm more in your debt now than ever," said Mrs. Webb, offering Evelyn her hand. "I feel as if I had robbed you of that money myself."

XIV.

THE next morning the Stearns boys arrived at Appleby Terrace; for several years they had spent their summers there. They were fine, handsome fellows, tall, with broad shoulders, blond and goodnatured. Roscoe Stearns was two years older than Gerald, but Gerald was a little the taller, and they were often taken for twins. Their faces were firmly outlined, and their blue eves wore a frank, manly expression. They were the sons of Dr. Reginald Stearns, of Boston. Their mother had died a few weeks after Gerald's birth, and they had been brought up by their father on strict scientific principles. He had kept a minute record of their growth, which included their weight at various periods, their infantile diseases, as well as of their quaint savings and their occasional misbehaviour, and he had made sacrifices in his large practice in order to give them the attention that their mother would have given if she had lived. He had a ruddy, kindly face, a contagious laugh, and a firm grip. Every Wednesday and Saturday, while the boys were at Appleby Terrace, he used to come down on an early boat and pass the afternoon and evening with them. They worshipped him, and they treated him like an older brother, and they called him "Pop." Mrs. Appleby was proud of having the boys in her house, and



she showed her esteem for their father by assuming in his presence her most affected manner. There was always rejoicing when they arrived. This year Mrs. Appleby met them at the door, and as she shook hands she gave each of them a hearty kiss.

"Oh! you're only boys to me though you are in Harvard," she laughed, when she saw them blush. Roscoe had been in college two years, and Gerald had just ceased to be a freshman.

Mrs. Bowen and Evelyn were half-hidden behind Mrs. Appleby's back. The boys gave them an enthusiastic greeting.

"Awfully glad you're down again," said Roscoe, shaking Evelyn's hand. "We must have some more Shakespeare." The year before they had read Shakespeare together under the trees. Evelyn had pretended to give Roscoe lessons in elocution, but she had really learned more from him than she had taught.

"Where is Ned?" she asked. "Isn't he coming?"

The reference was to Ned Osgood, the boys' inseparable companion and Roscoe's classmate, a tall, lean young man with a thin, serious face, but with a twinkle in his eyes that betrayed his real character. The year before, with his jokes, he had kept the house in a constant state of excitement. He was held in high favour by the boarders, but Mrs. Appleby abhorred him, and it was only her fondness for the other boys that persuaded her to take him back every year; she knew they would not come without him. It was he, she suspected, that inspired the nightly raids on the pantry.

Gerald was greeting Mrs. Bowen and Evelyn. "Is Mr. Seymour going to be here this summer?"



He had not heard that the engagement was broken. Evelyn, who was becoming hardened to these references, replied: "Yes, he's coming to-day, I think."

The boys must have noticed the embarrassment that fell upon the group, for a surprised look came into their faces. Evelyn knew that she could rely on Mrs. Bowen to explain everything. As soon as the boys had changed their clothes, Mrs. Appleby and Mrs. Bowen would confer with them in the parlour and prepare them for the summer life. To escape the conference, she decided to go away for a walk. The year before she had rarely been alone. Harold Seymour had spent most of his time with her, and Mrs. Appleby had been constantly inviting him to meals. This morning he was probably down at Scituate, calling on his friend, Tom Marble, the comedian.

Evelyn had not gone far along the Jerusalem Road when she saw a tall, athletic figure swinging down from the top of the hill. Oswald Webb did not recognise her until he had crossed into the road and had come face to face with her.

"I was just going to call on you," he said, smiling.

"And I was going for a walk."

"Then let us walk together. That will be better. Where were you going?"

"I thought of going down on the rocks. I like to sit there and see the waves dash up."

"I don't believe there'll be much dashing this morning. The sea is so calm. But I should like to go down with you if I may."

They walked along in silence for a moment. Then he said: "Mrs. Webb wanted me to come to see you."



"I hope she's better."

"Yes, she's much brighter this morning. But she hasn't quite recovered from that unfortunate journey."

When they reached the rocks, they sat down and watched the waves surging over them. The tide was rising rapidly.

"I often come here and sit," he said. "It soothes me when I'm low-spirited."

"I think I've seen you here."

He looked confused, but he made no comment. An ocean steamer was staining the sky with a long streak of black smoke. He said he thought it was the Cephalonia; he had gone over on the Cephalonia with Mrs. Webb three years before. But the voyage had not helped her; indeed, it had depressed her greatly. No, she hadn't been seasick; that seemed strange, but the sight of the ocean had almost maddened her. To avoid looking at it, she had been obliged to stay in her cabin and in the saloon, and she had dreaded the return trip so much that they had remained abroad several months longer than they intended to do. Only her terrible homesickness could have given her courage to face the ocean again.

There was a strangeness in his manner that made Evelyn think he was keeping back something. She wondered what it could be. At last he returned to the subject of the robbery, awkwardly, as if he felt he ought to apologise for touching upon it again.

"Mrs. Webb and I," he said, "have been talking—we've been thinking that—that we were to blame for losing your pocketbook."

"No, no, of course you weren't," Evelyn replied.



"But it wouldn't have happened if Mrs. Webb hadn't been taken ill; if you hadn't come to help her."

"It might," she said, dubiously, appreciating the force of the argument.

"But it really wouldn't. It was our fault."

"Oh, no, it was the fault of no one except the one that stole it. And I am sure you didn't steal it," she added, with a nervous laugh.

"I wish I had," he said. "I'd own up and give it back. But Mrs. Webb and I have looked at it from all sides, and we've come to the conclusion that we — that we owe you the money. It's just the same as if I had taken it. It's a debt."

"But it isn't," she insisted, trying to laugh. "I can't consider it that way."

He looked distressed — but he said: "All right; only she'll blame me. She'll say I wasn't tactful enough."

"Then you must tell her that I said you were very tactful. Tell her that you would have persuaded me, if I hadn't been the most obstinate person in the world."

"I couldn't say that," he replied, smiling.

The tide had risen almost to their feet, and at last Evelyn said she feared it wasn't safe for them to sit there any longer; besides, she ought really to go home, she had letters to write before luncheon. Webb rose and helped her over the rocks.

On the way he fell once more to talking about his wife.

"I hope you'll come to see Mrs. Webb again," he said. "Mrs. Webb doesn't often take fancies; but she has taken a great fancy to you. Besides," he



added, smiling, "you're the only actress she has ever met. You see the world is still new to her. She's been an invalid almost ever since she left school. You mustn't mind if she treats you as a kind of — of — "

"Curiosity?" said Evelyn, with a smile.

He burst out laughing. "No, I didn't mean that."

When they reached Appleby Terrace, they found Seymour there surrounded by the Stearns boys and by Ned Osgood, who had come in her absence. The boys' laughter could be heard a long distance away. When Ned saw her, he jumped from his seat, and seized both her hands.

"You're looking just as sweet as ever," he said. "I suppose you've been just pulverising hearts all winter."

Oswald Webb walked up to the porch to speak to the other boys and to ask for their father; so Evelyn had to present Harold Seymour. It struck Evelyn that there was a slight resemblance between the two men; but Webb's face had more vigour than Seymour's, and more character.

"I've often seen you in the water," said Webb. "Haven't we had swimming matches together?"

"I think we have," Seymour replied, smiling.

Seymour and Webb fell at once into animated talk about sports. They evidently liked each other, and were soon on a familiar footing. The boys turned their attention from Seymour and gathered around Evelyn.

Ned Osgood was in high spirits. He had stories to tell about his year in Cambridge. The boys were always enlightening her about college life. Her

ideas of Harvard had grown very mixed. thought it must be a queer college, but she had decided that any college that could show such boys as Roscoe and Gerald must be a very good place. Roscoe had a serious, searching mind, he studied and read hard, even in the dog-days. Gerald spent most of his time in dreaming and in writing bits of verse which he never elaborated into poems; had, too, a nice way with children, and all the youngsters in Cohasset knew and liked him. Ned Osgood took everything flippantly; he would always make a joke of life and be happy; at college, he never studied, but he invariably pulled through his courses, much to the wonderment of Roscoe, who used to worry about him and coach him before his examinations. They now had a great deal to tell Evelyn about their year in Cambridge. Each had enjoyed it in his own way: Roscoe with his work, Gerald with his dreams, and Ned with his sport. Evelyn was a sympathetic listener; she could even enjoy jokes she didn't understand; the boys were always trying to explain things to her, and her bewilderment greatly amused them. It was only when she was alone with Roscoe or with Gerald that she had serious talks with the brothers. Roscoe told her all about his work and his ambitions, and Gerald sometimes showed her his scraps of verse. They were deep in the discussion of college life, when Oswald Webb, with one of Seymour's cigars in his mouth, started to go.

"I have made a very long call," he said, apologetically, "and Mrs. Webb will worry. I don't often play truant like this."

Seymour walked a short distance up the road with



him, and the boys took themselves off to the beach. When Seymour returned, he sat beside Evelyn on the porch.

- "Oh, by the way," he said, "did you know they were going to have a performance of 'As You Like It' down here? It's to be on the grounds of some one named Stevenson, I think."
 - "At Mrs. Barclay Stevenson's, I suppose."
 - "Yes. that's it. They've asked me to do Orlando."
 - "Who's to be the Rosalind?"
- "I don't believe they have got any one yet. suggested you."
- "That was kind of you. But they'll want a better actress. Who's getting it up?"
- "That newspaper woman, Miss Finley, I think her name is, the woman that used to write things about us last summer."

Evelyn sighed. "Oh, she won't want me," she said. "I'm not important enough."

XV.

In the morning Evelyn received a long letter from Madge Guernsey. The soubrette began by announcing that she had signed with Saunderson for "Deception;" he had engaged her the day after the performance in Yonkers. She hadn't received the lines yet, but she had heard the part was great. And had Evelyn had any encouragement from Mrs. Freeman? Madge knew there was a beautiful part in Thayer's play that Saunderson hadn't engaged any one for; she had just cracked Evelyn up to the skies before Mrs. Freeman and Saunderson at the agency. Saunderson said the success of the new piece depended as much on the character of Mathilde as on the heavy part. On the last page of Madge's letter was a brief postscript, which read: "We talked you over pretty well after the performance in Yonkers. Mrs. Barton just railed about you. A certain person had been pouring his woes into her ears, and you know what that means; she said she thought you had treated a certain person real mean, and I up and defended you, and we had it hot and heavy till we got to New York. Though I did stick up for you, dear, I couldn't help feeling there was some right on a certain person's side. I suppose we oughtn't to be too hard on the dear boys. They can't be angels like we!" (With Evelyn, Madge sometimes made spasmodic and disastrous efforts to be grammatical.) "I believe they wouldn't be half as nice if they were, for, if there's anything I do like in a man, it's a little spice. I hate these tiresome, sleepy, psalm-singing things. So, dear, I hope you did make up. Mrs. Barton said he was all broke up,—a certain person, I mean. Wasn't he great, though, in the third act? Saunderson said he wished he could get him for 'Deception.' He said he (a certain person) could give Harry Davidson points. I think so, too. So, don't be a fool, dear."

Evelyn decided to answer Madge Guernsey's letter at once. When she had finished this task, one of the servants came up with a card. She wondered who would call her at that time in the morning. Perhaps Oswald Webb had come with another message from his wife. When she looked at the card, she read, "Miss Isabel Finley, *The Boston Telegraph.*"

It was not till she had begun to arrange her hair before the mirror that she recalled Miss Finley's connection with the performance of "As You Like It;" perhaps the call had something to do with that. They might ask her to play Phœbe; it was as good a part as she could expect to play.

Evelyn found Ned Osgood standing in the lower hall, peering into the parlour, where Miss Finley was rocking herself rhythmically. Ned beamed upon her as she descended the stairs.

- "Going to be interviewed?"
- "I hope not," Evelyn replied, with a smile.
- "Oh, come now, I believe you like it."
- "I wish you could go through it for me."

"So do I. Why can't I?"

"If you'll come in, I'll introduce you. You can

help me out."

- "Well, I guess not to-day," said Ned, laughing and drawing back. "I'm afraid. She looks dangerous. I'm always afraid of girls who wear red shoes. Just see her rocking in that chair, will you? She's quite at home."
 - "Sh! She'll hear you!"

"Aren't you going in?" Ned asked, seeing Evelyn hesitate.

"I'm afraid, too. I wish Mrs. Bowen were here."

"She was; but when she saw Miss Finley, she ran away. She said she knew you'd drag her in."

"That was very unkind of her."

Miss Finley continued to rock. Evelyn and Ned stood in the hall a few moments longer, scrutinising her.

"I suppose I must go in."

"Well, good luck to you," said Ned, cheerfully. "I'll be out on the porch, and, if she attempts personal violence, just scream and I'll rush in."

When Evelyn entered, Miss Finley rose from the rocker.

"I'm so glad to meet you at last," she said. "I feel as if I'd known you for years."

"You are very kind," replied Evelyn, hardly pre-

pared for this enthusiasm.

"Yes, ever since I saw you at the Museum. That's a long time ago. You've been on the stage a great many years, haven't you?"

"Seven," said Evelyn.

"Dear me, I never should suspect it. Why, you look ever so much younger than I do."



Evelyn made a rapid calculation, and decided that Miss Finley must be at least ten years older than herself.

"But actresses," the journalist went on, "seem to have the art of looking young always. Now, there's Mrs. Gwendoline West. She's fifty-five, if she's a day. Yet, when she fixes up, she looks as young - well, as any of us."

"Really?" said Evelyn, alarmed at the turn the

conversation had taken.

"Yes, but you should see her in the morning just after she gets up, or when she's in bed. Then she's ghastly. She's a great friend of mine. I once travelled with her for six weeks. I suppose you know her."

Evelyn shook her head.

"She's a good actress. I tried to get her for the play; but she's at the Thousand Islands, and wouldn't come."

"What play was that?" Evelyn asked, innocently.

"Ah, that's just what I've come to see you about." Miss Finley bent forward eagerly, allowing a little red shoe to peer from under her blue skirt. "We're going to get up a performance of 'As You Like It' for The Telegraph Fresh-Air Fund, to send poor children out of the city for a little while in the hot weather, you know. It's my pet charity." There was a pause, during which Miss Finley's eyes swept Evelyn from head to foot. "We want you to play for us in our performance," she went on, with her persuasive smile. "Will you?"

Evelyn felt her face flushing. "What part?" she asked.

"Why the leading part, of course."

"Rosalind?"

Miss Finley nodded.

"Oh, I wonder if I could! I wonder if I'm up to it?" Evelyn's face shone. To play Rosalind! She had never expected to get such a chance.

"I'm sure you are."

Then Evelyn recalled Miss Finley's remarks about Mrs. Gwendoline West. It was not such a compliment, after all; Mrs. West had refused the part; and at the last moment they invited her, probably because she would cost them nothing for railroad fares or board. The public, however, need not be informed of those things. It would be a legitimate advertisement for her. Besides, it would be almost impossible to fail in an open-air performance: the audience would be lenient: much would depend on her posing and her looks, and these she had skill enough to arrange satisfactorily.

Miss Finley was watching her closely. Finally Evelyn said:

"Oh. I don't know. I don't know."

"But you really must, dear," said the journalist.

"I will let you know to-morrow," Evelyn replied with decision.

"Can't you make it this afternoon?" asked Miss Finley, elevating her eyebrows. "I'll call."

"Oh, thank you," Evelyn replied, nervously. "But I'll save you the trouble by sending you a note. One of the boys will take it."

Miss Finley pursed her lips to indicate her satisfaction



- "When is it going to be?" Evelyn asked.
- "The seventeenth."
- "Of August?"
- "July."
- "So soon? Why, we shall hardly have time to learn the parts."

Miss Finley tried to pretend that she did not observe this betrayal; but Evelyn, who was angry with herself for having made it, saw her face light up.

- "We must have it early to get the money the fund needs. Besides, some of the actors have played the parts before. Mr. Seymour and Miss Gordon and Mr. Marble have, I know."
- "It seems hardly fair that Miss Gordon should play Celia to my Rosalind," said Evelyn. "She's a much better actress than I am."

Miss Finley looked as if she was going to say something; then she hesitated.

- "She's a charming Celia," she quietly remarked. "And she's a lovely woman, they say." Then Miss Finley went on: "The parts are all filled, except Phæbe. We haven't been able to get any one for that."
- "I know a little girl who could do it beautifully, Madge Guernsey. She was with us last season. Have you ever seen her?"
- "Madge Guernsey, Madge Guernsey," Miss Finley repeated, biting her card-case. "Was she the one that played the fairy in 'Aphrodite' two or three years ago?"
 - "Yes; that was her first part."
- "Do you think she could do Phœbe? Has she ever played a Shakespearean part?"

"No, but I'm sure she could. Besides, she's

very young and pretty, and she'd look Phæbe to perfection."

"Oh, then it's all right. Where does she live?

I'll wire her."

While Evelyn was scribbling Madge's address on a card, she said: "I've just been writing to her, but I haven't sent the letter off yet."

"Perhaps it would be better if you wrote her for us, dear."

Miss Finley asked a few polite questions about Evelyn's stage life. Did she like it? And was she glad to be back in Boston? Did she find acting wearing? Or was she one of those who didn't feel the parts they played? When Evelyn answered these and other questions, the journalist rose from the rocker and shook out her skirts. "I must go," she said, with her little smile.

Miss Finley stood musingly in the middle of the room. "I am so sorry for you — about that pocket-book."

"Thank you," said Evelyn.

"You haven't found it, have you?"

"No, I've given up all hope of finding it."

"Are you engaged again?" the journalist asked, thoughtfully, looking into Evelyn's eyes, and holding the card-case at her lips. "To that charming Mr. Seymour?"

"No, I am not," Evelyn replied, coldly, feeling the blood rush to her face.

Miss Finley nodded her head slowly three or four times. She seemed to be in deep thought.

"Good-bye, dear," she said, almost absent-mindedly, as if thinking out a paragraph.



As soon as Miss Finley left the house, Evelyn felt ashamed of having hesitated about accepting the part of Rosalind. It was absurd of her not to jump at such a chance; and Miss Finley was probably laughing at her now. She wrote at once to Madge about the performance, and in the afternoon she sent a note to the journalist, saying she would play the part of Rosalind with very great pleasure.

Late in the afternoon of the next day Seymour appeared at Appleby Terrace. He had just come up from Scituate, and he had brought Mr. Marble with him. Marble had acted the low comedy part for the first season in "The Flame of Life," and he passed each summer at Cohasset. Evelyn was glad to see her old comrade, but she felt sorry that he had chosen to call while in the sentimental stage of intoxication. The two actors had evidently been celebrating their reunion. The only betrayal Seymour gave was a very red face, which, however, might have been due to sunburn, and a strong odour of peppermint. Mr. Marble would have placed a paternal kiss on Evelyn's lips if she had given him any encouragement. The boys were delighted to meet him again; they had often applauded his remarkably fine performances, and they had boasted to their friends of their acquaintance with him. his periods of sobriety, Mr. Marble, like many comedians, was of a melancholy turn of mind. Even now, he tried to carry his stout little figure with an air of dignity, and, in presence of the ladies, to throw into his face an expression of deep seriousness. After polite inquiries about Evelyn's season, he devoted himself to Mrs. Bowen, whom he greatly

admired; he used to say that she was a "noble" woman. The boys joined in the conversation, forming a little circle of admirers around him.

"An' how is Mr. Bowen?" he asked, with a musical Irish inflection. When Mrs. Bowen replied that he was well, Mr. Marble went on:

"Ah, it's him that has the oie for business. I

s'pose he's still sellin' di'mon's."

"Yes," said Mrs. Bowen, slightly flushing. Though she appreciated the advantages of her husband's trade, she hated all reference to it.

"Well, well, it's a great business, a great business, the di'mon' business is. Are ye fond of jewelry yourself, ma'am?"

"No. I never wear jewelry."

"Now isn't that strange? Not to like jew'ls, an' your husband in the business, an' yer could get 'em for nothing."

"Not exactly for *nothing*," said Mrs. Bowen, laughing.

"You're thinking of stage jewels," said Ned.

"You can get stage jewels for nothing."

Evelyn and Harold Seymour had walked down to the other end of the porch.

"So you're going to play Rosalind?" Seymour remarked.

"How do you know?"

He took several puffs of his cigarette, making the sparks fly. "Miss Finley," he said. "Miss Finley's a great friend of mine. She's going to give me a lot of free 'ads' this summer. She told me I was worth more space to her than any one else at Cohasset."

A loud peal of laughter came from the group on



the porch. Mrs. Bowen looked embarrassed; she was fond of Ned, but she disliked his irreverence, and she did not enjoy the spectacle of a maudlin actor at the mercy of a thoughtless boy.

Seymour followed Evelyn across the piazza, and seated himself behind her.

"Do take Mr. Marble away," Mrs. Bowen whispered to him. "Can't you see the state he's in? Ned Osgood is making a fool of him."

Seymour rose slowly. "I think we'd better be getting back to the hotel, Tom."

But the comedian had begun to discuss the coming performance of "As You Like It," and he wished to continue. He was delighted to hear that Evelyn had decided to undertake Rosalind.

"İt'll be a trate to me to play with yer, dearie," he said. "In the part of the Clown, I'll be in me element."

"Won't it be great to hear the Clown talk with a brogue?" said Ned, to the annoyance of Evelyn, who knew how sensitive her old friend was.

"I never have a brogue on the stage, me lad," he explained, good-humouredly.

"But how about the open air?" Ned insisted.

"Begad, I niver thought of that. But everything goes at charity performances."

"I wish I could be in it," Ned went on. "Why can't I? Why can't we all go on as supes?"

The boys welcomed the suggestion. "That would be great," said Roscoe.

"I think we can manage it," said Seymour, "if you'll only behave yourself, Ned. None of your guying."

"Oh, I'll be good."



Mr. Marble had begun to give signs of extreme lassitude, and Mrs. Bowen whispered to Seymour that it would be a good time to carry him off now. Seymour determined to resort to guile.

"Feel like another drink, Tom?" he asked.

The comedian brightened. "Don't know but I do," he replied, genially.

"Well, we'll have to go over to the hotel for it.

It's time for us to go, anyway."

Mr. Marble straightened himself out with an effort. "I s'pose it is."

"I'll run over the part with you any time you like," said Seymour to Evelyn, as they started down the road.

"Oh, there's no hurry. I don't even know the lines yet. You know I never played my part before."

"It's three years since I did Orlando; but I guess it'll come back easy enough."

XVI.

THAT night it rained, and most of the boarders at Appleby Terrace stayed indoors. For a few moments Mr. Appleby came into the parlour to congratulate Evelyn on having been chosen for the part of Rosalind in the open-air performance. always had the news; how he obtained it no one could discover. This evening he sat beside Evelyn on the couch, and discussed the Rosalinds he had seen. Mr. Appleby explained to Evelyn some bits of business that Adelaide Neilson had introduced into the part, and Evelyn said that she would adopt them. He had a delightful tact in imparting information; he was interesting without seeming didactic. The boys and Mrs. Bowen, as well as Evelyn, listened attentively. Inspired by the incense of appreciation, Mr. Appleby might have passed the evening in talking, if his wife had not sauntered into the room and driven him precipitately away. The mere appearance of his wife in his presence annihilated his dignity.

"When this business kills me," said Mrs. Appleby to Evelyn, dropping into a chair, "I'll leave Appleby to you in my will." She always referred to her husband as "Appleby," to his great disgust. "You and Mrs. Bowen are the only ladies in the world he admires; and, as Mrs. Bowen is married, he'll have to take you. Perhaps he'll find an actress

can support him better than a boarding-house-keeper."

"You'll probably live much longer than I shall,"

said Evelyn, with a smile.

"Just hear the child. You'd think she was eighty."

"It's experience that makes people old, isn't it?"

said Mrs. Bowen.

"Then I'm as old as Methuselah! I've known Appleby for thirty-two years."

Roscoe Stearns had brought down from his room a small volume of Shakespeare, and Evelyn read over with him Rosalind's scenes in the first act. Mrs. Appleby sat and listened, fanning herself with the sailor cap.

"Roscoe ought to play with you," she said to Evelyn. "He reads like an actor!"

Roscoe flushed. "Reading and acting are two very different things," he said, with academic precision.

The next day was cool, and Evelyn, feeling that she was performing a disagreeable duty, decided to present herself at the house on the hill. Mrs. Webb met her in the library, and gave her a greeting that was quite as cordial, if less effusive than her previous one had been. She seemed less nervous.

"Mr. Webb is in the greenhouse," she said. "He'll come in presently. I'm glad he isn't here, because we can have a little talk together."

She waited until Evelyn had adjusted herself comfortably in one of the big leather chairs.

"I wasn't well when you came before; but I did want to see you so much that I had to come down. I'm awfully obstinate, and, when I want

to do a thing, I must do it, that's all. So, I appeared at my very worst. Oh, you needn't deny it. I know I did. I was horrid. I must have said a lot of horrid things; but I'm only going to apologise for one, and that is what I said about Mrs. Bowen. Oswald was awfully shocked when I told him. I tell him everything. He thought I ought to send you a note; but I knew it would be better to wait and tell you yourself. But, as I said, I was just as sick as I could be that day, and I suppose I had to vent my spleen on some one. I'm sure she's a nice, good woman, but good people often have a very bad effect on me. Now, there are my relatives; nearly all of them have turned against me just because, when I've been sick, my tongue's run on, and I've said things they won't forgive."

She smiled pathetically at Evelyn. Evelyn hoped that Mr. Webb would come in soon. She dreaded hearing the invalid's complaints. As Mrs. Webb was about to resume, a heavy step was heard from the hall. Then Webb, his arms covered with flowers, entered the room.

"Oh!" he said, in surprise. "I didn't hear the bell. I can't shake hands with you, you see." When he had deposited the flowers in an enormous glass bowl on the table, he offered his hand. "You are very kind to come and see two solitary people."

"Oswald, I wish you had stayed away longer," exclaimed the invalid. "I've a great deal more to say to Miss Johnson."

"But can't you say it before me? No secrets so soon, I hope."

"Well, as long as you're here, you may stay," she conceded.

"A man is always in the way," he said, with a smile, turning to Evelyn.

"Some men are, dear. But you're only in the

way sometimes."

Mrs. Webb turned to Evelyn. "I've been reading a horrid book to-day," she said. "One of those stories where women are immolated on account of their conscience. Aren't they dreadful? Oh, I wish women didn't have any consciences. I should be ever so much happier if I didn't have any."

"But what a queer world it would be, dear," said Webb, "if we were all without consciences. Then

we'd never be sure of our purses."

"It would be ever so much nicer," she insisted,

inconsequently.

- "A conscience," Webb went on, "is a very delicate instrument. It gets out of gear as easily as a finely constructed watch. It grows too sensitive or too sluggish with the least provocation. I wish that we could have conscience-doctors. There wouldn't be half so much illness and misery in the world then."
- "Oswald is just as bad as I am on the subject. Only he thinks about consciences in general, and I think about one conscience in particular."

"Sometimes I think about my own, dear," he

protested, with a laugh.

"But more often you think about other people's. I believe everybody has a right to look out for his own, and do as he pleases with it."

"So do I, dear. But we ought to be taught just how to deal with our consciences. Some of us don't know how."

"Mr. Webb wastes a great deal of time over



these subtleties, Miss Johnson. You mustn't let him ensnare you. I think the best we can do is to fight our own battles, and let others fight theirs."

Webb laughed again. "What a selfish doc-

trine!"

"But we must be selfish in this world. We were put here to develop ourselves."

"But most of our wise men believe that the best way to develop ourselves is to help others to develop themselves."

"Now, Oswald, that's only a simple, old-fashioned doctrine put into outlandish words."

"It's the doctrine that Christianity is founded

on," he replied, smiling.

Mrs. Webb turned suddenly to Evelyn. "Do you think Christianity has done the world any good, Miss Johnson?"

"I've never doubted it," Evelyn answered, be-

traying astonishment.

"Now, that's the kind of thing Mr. Webb's always thinking and talking about. Do you wonder that I'm worn to a shadow?" she asked, with a smile. "Sometimes I get so confused! I wonder if anything in the world is good. I even wonder if my husband is."

"I don't pretend to be, dear."

"You mustn't believe him, Miss Johnson. He knows that he's very good. I've told him so often enough, and he always relies on my judgment — except where books are concerned. I believe that all books ought to be cheerful."

"Then we should have to give up a good many really great books, shouldn't we?" Webb said, quietly. "Still, Darwin used to say that all novelists who made their stories end unsatisfactorily ought to be killed."

"Well, I don't say that," said Mrs. Webb. "But I say that all bad books should be suppressed."

"It would be so hard to decide what was good

and what was bad," Evelyn remarked.

"Ah, you're right there," Webb agreed. "That's just the difficulty. We're getting too complex. By and by we sha'n't be able to unravel things, and we shall have to go back to simple ways."

"Oswald's always talking about simplicity," said Mrs. Webb. "I think it is all affectation. I want things to be complex. It's ever so much more

exciting."

"We should get rid of ever so many of our troubles and our doubts if life were simpler," Webb went on. "We should find that we really agreed about nearly all of the things we quarrel over. We spend too much time in pointing out differences. But, my dear, I am afraid we're boring Miss Johnson with our theories."

The invalid laughed. "With your theories, Oswald. I haven't any. I accept life as it is. And it seems quite good enough to me. I only wish I could enjoy it. Now if I were like Miss Johnson, I should be perfectly happy."

"Without a husband, you mean," said Webb,

with a smile.

"No, I should still keep you, dear. But I should like to have Miss Johnson's youth and health and talent. It seems so wonderful, so wonderful, your life," she went on, looking at Evelyn with pathetic envy.

"But it really isn't half so fine as it seems," said Evelyn. "The glamour disappears very soon."

"But the excitement, the excitement! How exhilarating it must be! Oh, dear! It can't be that you are pessimistic," said Mrs. Webb, with a laugh. "Oswald, Miss Johnson must be in love. Who is he, Miss Johnson? Some splendid, handsome actor?"

Evelyn shook her head. "Miss Johnson is in love with her art," said Webb, with the air of making a joke. Then he turned to Evelyn. "Are you studying some new parts now?"

"I am working on Rosalind. For the out-of-

door performance, you know."

"No, we don't know," said Mrs. Webb. "What out-of-door performance?"

Evelyn explained, and Mrs. Webb clasped her hands. "Isn't that splendid, Oswald! Oh, how I should like to go! Perhaps I can. Mrs. Stevenson's isn't so far away. Besides, I could rest in her house if I got tired."

"We know Mrs. Stevenson very well," Webb

explained.

"Oh, wouldn't it be delightful! And I'm so glad that you are to be the Rosalind. Just think of it, Oswald, we have her here, right before us, in our house — Rosalind!" Mrs. Webb seemed like a child.

"It's a great honour," said her husband, entering into her mood. "Rosalind didn't call on many people."

Mrs. Webb questioned Evelyn about the details of the performance. Who were to take part? Mr. Seymour as Orlando? Hadn't she heard that name

before? Oh, yes, yes! He was a friend of Miss Johnson's. And that brilliant Miss Gordon was to be the Celia? Did Oswald remember her in "Mary Stuart" with Mrs. Edwards? They had both been thrilled by her performance of Elizabeth. Perhaps they should meet her. Perhaps Miss Johnson would bring her to call. What wonderful people Miss Johnson must know! Oswald and she had talked for weeks about Miss Gordon's reading of the blank verse. He fairly raved over her! And would they have the rehearsals in the open air? Mrs. Webb wished that she could be an actress. Oswald needn't laugh. She was in earnest.

When she had finished her rhapsody, Webb said, jokingly, "I should rather like to take part myself."

"You might play the melancholy Jacques," his wife suggested.

"I could play the Wrestler. I should like immensely to have a bout with Mr. Seymour."

"Why don't you?" said his wife, catching at the idea. "People would come from miles around to see you. It would bring money to the fund."

Webb laughed; then he changed the subject so suddenly that Evelyn had a feeling of discomfort which she could not explain.

XVII.

THE next day Evelyn received letters from Madge Guernsey and Helen Gordon. Madge was delighted at the prospect of playing Phæbe. would be a chance for her to get away for a little while from Jimmy Wise. As she had already written Evelyn, Jimmy had become altogether too persistent; he had shown a disposition to demand a "Yes," or a "No." That was what she hated in men; they didn't know when to let well enough alone. If Jimmy kept on, she should have to tell him "No," flatly; still, he was her only refuge during the summer at Providence. It was annoying to have him act so, for it really would be very stupid during the evenings without him. He had threatened to go to Cohasset and spend a week while she was there; but she had told him that he would simply be in the way; she should have to give all her time to rehearsals; but he might run up for the performance. Madge added in a postscript that she should be delighted to accept Evelyn's invitation to stay with her. And were those lovely boys there, and that nice Mrs. Bowen that she had talked about so much last season? Madge felt awfully sorry about that money. It would have killed her.

Miss Gordon wrote that she was sure that Evelyn



would do far better with Rosalind than either Mrs. West or Mrs. Edwards had done. In the first place. Evelyn would look the part, and then she would read it well. Miss Gordon had heard some charming things about Evelyn; Saunderson had praised her Mabel Annerley to Mrs. Freeman; she had also heard that Saunderson was hesitating between Belle Livingstone and Evelyn for the second part. She did hope Evelyn would get it. That lovely Miss Finley had written something about Madge and the part of Phœbe, but Miss Finley's handwriting was so bad that she had been unable to make out what was meant. Miss Finley always seemed to be in such a desperate hurry. Miss Gordon was looking forward to meeting her. was having a lovely time on Staten Island. people at the hotel were making everything of her! A great many of them had seen her from the front.

Evelyn set to work on Rosalind in earnest. Much might depend on her success with it. If Saunderson held off engaging some one for Mathilde in "Deception," he might be impressed by favourable notices of her Rosalind in the Boston papers, and give the part to her.

She soon fell back into the old routine of her life at Cohasset. Nearly every morning, when the tide suited, she bathed with the boys and with Harold Seymour. Mrs. Bowen never could be induced to enter the water; she said it gave her palpitation of the heart, and she enjoyed the fun just as much from looking on. Seymour and the boys were good swimmers; it was Roscoe who had taught Evelyn her first strokes. Ned occasionally showed a disposition to "duck" her; but he was



always prevented by his two friends, who pounced upon him, and for punishment held him under the water until he was out of breath. In the afternoon Evelyn worked on her part either in Mrs. Bowen's room, or with Roscoe on the porch, or occasionally on the small sloop yacht which Seymour had hired for the season.

Seymour used to enjoy listening to Roscoe's rehearsals with Evelyn. When they sat under the trees, he liked to lie on the ground, or, when they were on the yacht, to stretch himself on deck, and listen to the elaborate discussions over disputed readings and involved meanings in the text. He had a fine scorn for these subtleties; they seemed to him a waste of time; he could interpret luminously a line that he only vaguely understood, relying almost wholly on his intuition and on his Evelyn, on the contrary, had to study a speech very carefully to understand it in all its bearings, before she could properly interpret it. She used to make Roscoe read the blank verse again and again, in order that she might catch the rhythm. Seymour could recite the verse correctly at the first reading. He had never understood why one of his friends, a good actor in parts of the modern school, had been obliged to throw up a lucrative engagement as leading support to Mrs. Edwards, who gave several of Shakespeare's plays, simply because he could not master the blank verse.

On the day when Madge was to come, Mrs. Bowen, Evelyn, and the boys went down to the boat-landing at Nantasket to meet her. They had some difficulty in finding her in the crowd on the steamer; but at last Evelyn singled her out, and

in a moment they were in each other's embrace. It was a warm day, and Madge seemed hot and tired. Mrs. Bowen and the boys eyed her eagerly, and they all looked disappointed. Madge might be pretty on the stage, but she certainly didn't appear to good advantage at this moment.

"I know I'm a guy, dear," she whispered to Evelyn, "but I can't help it. I've been shopping all the morning in Boston, and I'm played out. How is everything? Got your engagement yet?"

Evelyn shook her head. "I haven't heard a word," she said.

"Dear me, I hoped Saunderson would engage you. But I know Belle Livingstone hasn't signed with him. She wrote me the other day she'd an offer to go out with one of Dan Magruder's road companies."

Mrs. Bowen had come up smiling, and the boys followed. "So this is Mrs. Bowen," said Madge. "I'm so glad to meet you at last. I've heard lots of nice things about you. And are these the boys? And Mr. Osgood; is this Mr. Osgood? How do you do? You're Ned, aren't you? I know all about you. I advise you not to try to guy me. I'm dangerous. Ain't I, Evelyn?"

Ned and Madge were well acquainted before the stage had carried them half the distance to Appleby Terrace. "Oh, I just adore this place," Madge exclaimed, as they rolled along the Jerusalem Road. "Look at those lovely rocks, and look at the sea, will you? See here, what's that thing out there, sticking right up out of the water?"

"That's Minot's," Ned replied. "Minot's Light."



"Why, of course, I've often heard of it. Ain't it grand?"

"What — the lighthouse?"

"The sea, I mean; the sea. I don't believe you're a bit poetic."

"I'm awfully poetic," said Ned.

"Don't believe him," said Mrs. Bowen. "Gerald is the poetic one. He writes the prettiest verses."

Gerald blushed furiously. "They're only dog-

gerel, Miss Guernsey."

"Well, write some doggerel about me, will you?" Madge asked, coquettishly. Then she said, pointing at Ned, "I knew he was guying. He ain't got any more poetry in him —"

"Oh, Miss Guernsey!" Ned remonstrated.

"I'm poetic," Madge went on, addressing Gerald. "Are you?" said Gerald, blushing again. Ger-

"Are you?" said Gerald, blushing again. Gerald was unused to badinage with girls, and he had never met any one like Madge before.

"Of course I am. Now, you ought to have said: 'I knew you were poetic the minute I set eyes on you.'"

Gerald laughed. "I'll say it next time."

"Oh!" Mrs. Bowen exclaimed, "you're delicious."

"I'm used to a great deal of attention," Madge continued. "Now I hope you boys are going to be awfully nice to me while I'm here."

When Mrs. Appleby appeared on the porch to welcome Madge, Evelyn noticed with intense relief that she had not put on her sailor cap. Evelyn looked around for Mr. Appleby, but he was not in sight; she felt a little uneasy with regard to the effect Madge would have on his nerves.



Madge insisted upon going to her room at once, "to put on some decent things." She did not reappear till dinner-time. Then she wore a simple white muslin gown, and her light hair was coiled tightly at the back of her head. Mrs. Bowen and the boys, as well as Evelyn, were delighted. Mrs. Bowen told her that she was "a picture."

After dinner Seymour called at Appleby Terrace, and suggested that they go for a sail. The night was warm and clear, and there was a three-quarters moon. There was only a faint breeze, and the boat did little more than drift on the placid surface of the sea. In the distance Minot's Light gleamed intermittently. Madge wanted to know why it kept going out all the time. Roscoe explained that it was a revolving light, and entered into an elaborate description of its workings, which made Madge yawn. Roscoe was full of all kinds of information, gathered from observation and reading. Gerald, on the contrary, looked at things from the æsthetic point of view only; he concerned himself with effects, never caring to investigate causes or details.

Madge put her hand over the side of the boat, and, as the water ran through her fingers, she began to sing an air from one of the popular comic operas. When she finished, the boys applauded her vigorously, and cried, "More, more," after the fashion of the students at Cambridge when the Glee Club sang in the college yard on spring nights. Then Madge sang song after song, and Seymour, who had given the tiller to Roscoe, curled himself up on the little deck, with his chin near Evelyn's elbow. The waves sparkled in the moonlight, and



lapped softly the sides of the yacht; on shore the lights from the cottages twinkled, and the air pulsed with the tones of Madge's voice.

"Doesn't this remind you of last summer?"

Seymour whispered.

"I hadn't thought of it," Evelyn replied, almost inaudibly.

"I've been thinking of it," he said, "and I've been thinking what a — what a fool I've been."

She did not answer.

"Are you ready for the first rehearsal to-morrow?" he asked.

"Yes, I know my lines. Do you?"

"Oh, I'll have them. I'll run them over tomorrow morning." For a moment he was silent. Then he went on: "I think you're going to make a hit."

"Thank you."

"It's a great chance for you."

"Too great."

"Oh, no. You'll be up to it."

Madge began another song, and they listened for a moment.

"Have you got anything yet," Seymour whispered, "for next season?"

She shook her head.

"I hope you won't want anything." Then he went on rapidly: "I've been trying not to say anything, and I intended to keep quiet for a long time yet; but I can't any longer. Don't you see that I care for you more than I ever did? It's awfully rough on a man to be kept in suspense this way. Most men wouldn't — they couldn't stand it. But I know I deserve it. I don't complain. Only you might let me down a little easier."

He stopped for a moment, and she said nothing. Her eves wandered to the shore, and in the distance, high on the top of the hill, she saw a faint light in the cottage of the Webbs. Mrs. Webb had probably gone to bed, and the light came from the library where her husband was probably reading. His life was so different from any life she had ever known: it had opened up a new world to her, a world of thought and of fancy, where one might escape from a life of uneasiness and care. Seymour never read books; his thoughts were utterly superficial. Yet he attracted her as no other man had ever done, but with an attraction that gave her no sense of peace or security, that made her at times feel conscious of a weakness in herself. At this moment only her pride prevented her from saying she would forgive and ignore the past, that it was too hideous to remember, that she would take him back on the old footing.

"Don't you think it would be a fine thing," he asked, laughing and resting his head on his arm, "to leave the stage in a blaze of glory?"

"I don't think I should miss it much," she replied.

"Now, if you were to retire after this performance, Miss Finley would give you a magnificent send-off."

"But I have no intention of retiring. Something will turn up."

"Of course something will, if you want it. But why go on drudging on the road when you can—"

"When I can what?"



"When you can stay in New York, and keep some one that adores you in the right track."

"He ought to keep himself in the right track."

"But he can't without you. He's only a poor, weak, good-natured man. His good nature will ruin him — unless you come to his rescue. You see I put it on the ground of common charity."

"I see you do."

"You do care for me a little, don't you, Evelyn?"

"I'll think about it."

"It's very embarrassing — this uncertainty."

"What uncertainty?"

"Why, to have people asking all the time whether you're engaged or not. They're always asking me."

"They don't ask me."

"But you know they keep up a lot of thinking."

"I know they do," Evelyn said, with a deep sigh.

Evelyn suspected that Madge kept singing to enable Seymour to continue his whispering. The whole world seemed to be in conspiracy to make her take him back. Mrs. Bowen was the chief conspirator. Between Mrs. Bowen and Seymour a friendship had grown up; they were always having secret conversations. When Madge stopped singing, Seymour relieved Roscoe at the tiller. The wind had died down, the boat had ceased to move, and the sail flapped listlessly.

"I hope we aren't going to get stuck here all night," said Seymour.

"What a lark!" cried Madge.

It was nearly twelve o'clock before any wind stirred, and Seymour was able to make for home.



As they climbed the hill to Appleby Terrace, they heard the Cohasset town clock strike twelve.

"That is just like being on the road again, ain't it?" said Madge to Evelyn, as they entered the house.

XVIII.

THAT night Evelyn did not fall asleep till the early morning light entered the room. Harold Seymour's conversation had roused her to a sense of her position. Since her arrival at Appleby Terrace she had tried not to think of her relations with him; she had been content to let things take their own course. She almost wished he had not spoken; she had enjoyed drifting. For a while she had almost ceased to worry over her engagement for the coming season; vet the time was rapidly passing when most of the engagements were made; if she did not secure something within a fortnight her prospects would be very dubious. Since the beginning of her career she had never before been out of an engagement. She might escape from her difficulties by marrying; this, however, would be a miserable compromise with failure. Deep down in her consciousness she believed that it was only a question of time when she should take Harold Seymour back; but she owed it to herself, to her dignity, to punish him. late he had seemed so different from what he had once been; perhaps it was simply that she had changed herself, or that she regarded him from a new point of view. Lately she had begun to feel something like pity for him. He was so strong, yet so weak; so handsome, yet at times almost uninteresting, with his indifference to serious matters and his light talk. She had begun to be annoyed by his lack of dignity, his familiarity with every one he met, his fondness for lounging. She tried to excuse him by telling herself that the theatrical life made a man undignified and flippant and lazy; yet she could not help comparing him with a man like Oswald Webb. Harold Seymour's qualities were nearly all physical, instinctive.

The rehearsals on Mrs. Stevenson's lawn passed very smoothly, except on the second afternoon, when it rained, and the actors had to flee indoors, where their hostess, a large woman, with a velvet voice that seemed to run on one key, gave them cakes and tea and wine. Miss Finley was usually present; but she never interfered. She seemed always to be absorbed in conversation with some of the ladies. frequently with Helen Gordon, occasionally with Madge Guernsev. Most of the actors had played their parts before and knew their lines. Seymour acted with an ease that gave confidence to Evelyn. Their scenes brought them constantly together, and when they were not acting he was generally sitting by her side and joking with some of the other players around them. At the rehearsals, Mr. Marble, who frequently betrayed that he had been too self-indulgent, kept complimenting her on her improvement, and saying that before long he should see her starring. The Stearns boys, who had at first been eager to take part in the performance, lost courage. Ned Osgood, however, was still enthusiastic. had fascinated him, and in the absence of older admirers she used him to fetch and carry. Of the other boys she stood somewhat in awe; she told



Evelyn that she thought they were "dear things," but "kind of queer." She was puzzled by Gerald's moods, by his fondness for going off alone and sitting on the rocks, and by Roscoe's studious habits in midsummer.

The *Telegraph* of the Sunday following the first rehearsal betrayed the motive of Miss Finley's conferences with the actresses. It was dotted with items relating to the performers. Evelyn counted six paragraphs developed from remarks that she had inadvertently dropped in the journalist's presence. and four relating to herself, to the dresses she wore at the beach, including a description of her bathing costume, her fondness for swimming, her continued presence at Appleby Terrace, and her probable success with the Rosalind. To Miss Gordon, Miss Finley gave a column and a half, which included two pictures; Madge Guernsey, too, came in for some gratuitous references, but not enough, Evelyn feared, to gratify her hunger for "notices."

If the weather favoured, the performance would be given on Thursday afternoon; in case of rain, it would take place on Saturday. For Wednesday morning a dress-rehearsal had been called, and when Evelyn arrived at Mrs. Stevenson's she found the grounds arranged for the performance. At some distance from the house, a natural stage had been made by a semicircle of trees, whence the actors were to emerge. It was separated from the area set apart for the spectators by a band of ribbon tied around the trunks of the two trees at either end; the seats had been arranged in tiers, like seats at a circus. As Evelyn glanced at the out-of-door theatre, she was seized with stage fright. She pic-

tured those seats crowded with a critical audience of women and men, the bright-coloured dresses and the red parasols of the women gleaming in the sun. She wondered if she could make herself felt in the open air, with the sky formidably stretching above her; her art might not be "subtle," as Miss Gordon had once characterised it, but her methods were certainly not broad, and her voice was light. In an open-air performance an actor should try for large effects, which she could not achieve. However, it was too late to back out now.

XIX.

The next morning Madge woke early and, jumping out of bed, ran eagerly to the window. "Oh, it's raining!" she said, peering into a gray mist.

"Raining?" Evelyn repeated, sleepily.

"What a shame! They'll have to put off the show."

"Is it raining hard?"

"No, just kind of misting."

"What time is it?"

Madge looked at her watch. "Twenty minutes of seven."

"Then it will probably clear. If it were nine o'clock I should be afraid."

The rain soon ceased and the sun quickly burned away the mist. At breakfast, Mrs. Bowen offered congratulations on the weather; she was much more excited about the performance than either Evelyn or Madge. Evelyn looked forward to it with a nervousness that she tried hard to hide; Madge anticipated brilliant press notices.

"I do hope that woman will spread herself on this thing," said Madge. "I intend to send all my notices to Saunderson."

Harold Seymour called a little before noon. He had just met Rodney, the Wrestler, and had arranged the business for the bout. He asked Evelyn if she

were nervous, and she pressed her lips together. Madge, however, declared that she wasn't in the least "rattled:" if she only looked decent, she'd be all right; but she didn't feel sure of her make-up in the open air. Mrs. Bowen, however, would see that she did herself justice. In spite of her protestations, Madge betrayed nervousness by dancing up and down on the piazza and by laughing hysterically at Ned's jokes.

Mrs. Appleby had provided an early luncheon for Evelyn and Madge and Mrs. Bowen. She was pleased that her house should be so conspicuously represented in the performance, and she showed her appreciation of her gifted boarders by helping to wait on the table. In her Sunday afternoon black silk and white lace she made a striking picture, as she carried plates of soup and vegetables from the pantry door to the table. She announced, with mingled scorn and gratification, that Mr. Appleby had consented to accompany her to the performance.

When they reached Mrs. Stevenson's they found Miss Finley uttering ejaculations, giving instructions, panting with excitement. She fairly bloomed, as some plain women bloom under the inspiration of love; she looked almost pretty.

"Isn't it a perfect day!" she said to Evelyn. "You'll find everything ready for you in your tent. Mrs. Stevenson's maid will look after you and Miss Guernsey. Miss Gordon's going to dress in one of the other tents. It's more convenient. If you want anything just ask for it."

Long before Evelyn was ready for the first act, the audience had begun to assemble. She could hear the laughing and talking; she wondered why it was that in the open air women were so fond of screaming. Miss Finley's shrill voice could be heard from all directions; she seemed to be dividing her attentions between the audience and the actors.

Evelyn made a striking appearance in her yellow brocade gown, with a broad ruff around the neck, and Madge, in her little straw hat and short peasant's dress, was an ideal rustic. Mrs. Bowen was delighted with the result of her efforts; she had refused the assistance of Mrs. Stevenson's maid; she wanted all the credit of her friend's adornment for herself.

When they left the tent they found several of the performers walking about under the trees where they were sheltered from the audience. Near-by, Seymour was chatting with Mr. Marble; the costumed group looked so peculiar in the open air that Evelyn and Mrs. Bowen burst out laughing.

"I feel as if I had strayed into another century,"

Mrs. Bowen explained.

"You look very stunning," Seymour whispered to Evelyn. "We sha'n't be in it with you."

Evelyn caught up the train of her dress and started to walk away.

"You know you've made me a promise," he said.

"I haven't forgotten," she replied, turning to go back to the tent for the lace handkerchief she had forgotten.

On her return she looked through the trees. The seats were crowded and the bright dresses and parasols of the ladies gleamed in the sunshine. She had some difficulty in finding Mrs. Webb. At last, in a group seated on chairs placed on the greensward,

she saw Oswald Webb, seated beside his wife. Mrs. Webb was tastefully dressed in lavender, with a lavender bonnet, and looked brighter than Evelyn had ever seen her look before. Evelyn was so hemmed in by the trees that no one could see her; but she could see Mrs. Bowen talking with Helen Gordon, and she could catch glimpses a little farther away of Madge and Ned Osgood rollicking together.

"They wanted me to play Rosalind," Helen Gordon was saying, "but I had never done it before, and I hated to get up in it in hot weather. It would have been such a bore. So I said I'd do Celia for them. I've played Celia so often that it's like A B C to me. Then I knew they had asked Mrs. West to do it, and I didn't propose to take it after she'd refused it. I knew just what she'd say."

Mrs. Bowen replied in a voice too low to be overheard.

"Yes," Miss Gordon went on, "I feel so sorry for her. She's a lovely girl; but she hasn't much talent, you know. I can't understand why she ever went on the stage. She'd make a splendid schoolteacher, don't you think so? And then I thought it would be such a chance for her. I knew that Miss Finley was getting desperate; so I wrote and advised her to ask Evelyn to do the part. But, of course, she doesn't know anything about that. Evelyn is refined and intelligent, and I felt sure she could go through it all right - that is, well enough, you know. I had to crack her up a little to Miss Finley, and — well — I did draw a pretty long bow. But what are friends for, anyway, if they don't help each other? So that was how she got the chance. do feel nervous for her, though. Poor thing!



wish she'd marry Harold Seymour. It would be the best thing for her. Any one can see that she's dead in love with him."

Evelyn leaned against the trunk of one of the trees. Then she stood up straight again. How dared that woman speak so about her, in such a tone of contemptuous pity, and to her friend, too? How dared she do it? She would show her whether she could act or not. She would show her that her sympathy was quite wasted. To say such things under the pretence of friendliness! Mrs. Bowen ought not to have listened; she ought to have stopped her! But Mrs. Bowen was always politic: she was too politic; she had a morbid fear of making enemies. But she would prove to Helen Gordon and to Mrs. Bowen, too, that she was no object of pity! A school-teacher! Now that she was on the stage — she wished that she had never been in a theatre. that she had never seen even the *outside* of one — but now that she was on the stage, she would let them know that she belonged there! And then, Helen Gordon's presumption in connecting her name in that way with Harold Seymour's, to speak of his marrying her as an act of charity! Oh, how cruel some women could be to other women!

XX.

The performance was a success. Even the weather had seemed to play into the journalist's hands. Evelyn, about whose fitness for the part Miss Finley had been made nervous by Miss Gordon, made a good impression; indeed Miss Finley conceded that Miss Johnson deserved a great deal of credit. Her scene with the Duke she played with a passionate vehemence that astonished Seymour. When she went back to the tent, Mrs. Bowen, who had been watching her from between the trees, hurried after her and found her panting on the lounge that Mrs. Stevenson had provided.

"I'll show them what I can do," she said, with a nervous laugh.

It flashed upon Mrs. Bowen that Evelyn had overheard the conversation between herself and Miss Gordon; but she made no reference to it. The exhilaration of the earlier scenes was plainly inspiring Evelyn for the others. The simplicity of her style, often ineffective in the artificial surroundings of the theatre, gave her interpretation a delicacy and force which might have been lost on a conventional stage. Miss Gordon's work, on the contrary, fine as it was both in action and delivery, suffered from the absence of the footlights; it was essentially art; everything she did had been care-

fully planned with a view to effect, and many of her best effects missed fire. Her manner and her looks seemed almost coarse; she had made up injudiciously, almost shamelessly. After her first scene she appeared to realise that she was out of her element, and during the rest of the performance she acted carelessly, with an almost listless indifference. She even cut out some of the "business" which she and Evelyn had planned. Off the stage her manner towards Evelyn suddenly altered; Mrs. Bowen observed the change, and as she helped Evelyn to remove her doublet and hose for Rosalind's return to feminine attire, she said:

"Even Miss Gordon acknowledges your success. She's jealous."

"She tried to spoil one of my scenes," Evelyn replied. "She thought I'd make a flat failure of the part. I suppose that's why she wanted me to play it," she added, bitterly, "so that she could shine by comparison."

"Miss Gordon told me she had been offered the part of Rosalind before you were," Mrs. Bowen remarked, "and I asked Miss Finley about it a few minutes ago. She said it wasn't true at all."

"M'm," Evelyn exclaimed, without making further comment.

"She's a dreadful person," Mrs. Bowen went on, taking a pin from her mouth and inserting it in one of the folds of Rosalind's dress. "I don't know which is worse — Miss Gordon or Miss Finley."

"They're a good deal alike," Evelyn replied, wearily. She was beginning to feel the effect of the afternoon's excitement.

"I'm sure they'll have a quarrel," Mrs. Bowen

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went on, taking another pin from her mouth, which seemed to have the capacity of a fair-sized pincushion. "People who have such violent friendships are sure to get into hot water. Besides, they're altogether too sharp for each other. She said she wasn't doing her best. She said you and Mr. Seymour had made the hits."

Evelyn had scarcely time to finish dressing when her cue was given. Before the final act had ended, the audience began to disperse, and the last words of the play were given while most of the people were either leaning or standing in their seats. The performers, however, were greeted with a burst of applause and a great fluttering of handkerchiefs, and they had to reappear hand-in-hand on the greensward and bow their acknowledgments. Evelyn and Seymour were in the centre. Seymour was in high spirits. As he stood laughing at the animated faces in the crowd, he whispered:

"I didn't think you could do it."

Some ruthless hand tore down the band of ribbon that had separated the stage from the audience, and Evelyn speedily found herself surrounded. As she was slowly making her way back to the tent, she met Miss Finley, who clutched her by the arm.

"Oh, you dear thing," she cried, "you've been splendid. Mrs. West herself couldn't have played it better."

When Evelyn reached the tent, she found Mrs. Bowen bending over a mass of roses.

"They've just come. Aren't they lovely?"

"Who sent them?" asked Evelyn. "Isn't there a card?"



"Look!" cried Mrs. Bowen. "There's a package here of some sort. Shall I take it out?"

"Yes," Evelyn replied, sinking in a chair. "Take it out and open it." Mrs. Bowen carefully removed the white ribbons and opened the box. Then she uttered a little cry. She held out the box, and Evelyn saw resting on a wad of cotton-wool a small diamond-studded gold watch.

Evelyn gasped. Then her face turned scarlet.

"It's from the Webbs," said Mrs. Bowen. "Here's their card."

Just then Madge Guernsey burst into the tent and looked over Mrs. Bowen's shoulder.

"Well, if you ain't the luckiest thing!" she said, turning to Evelyn. "But you don't seem to appreciate it," she added, reproachfully.

"I can't take it," said Evelyn.

"Oh, you ninny!" Madge exclaimed.

"It must have cost as much as three hundred dollars," said Mrs. Bowen, whose tact sometimes failed her.

When Evelyn returned home the thought of that watch considerably marred her pleasure in her success. For a long time she could not make up her mind whether to accept it or to send it back. Mrs. Bowen's reference to its cost added to her worry; she disliked accepting such a gift from people on whom she had so slight a claim. But if she returned it, she would probably give pain to the invalid, and possibly arouse her resentment. Besides, under the circumstances, it was something more than a gratuitous offering. But this consideration only increased the difficulty. At last Evelyn decided to keep the watch; she did not really have the courage to send

it back. So, before going to bed, she wrote a note of thanks to Mrs. Webb.

The next morning the Boston papers, which Madge had ordered, came while she and Evelyn were sound asleep. The soubrette was wide awake at once, and began eagerly to search through the voluminous pages of the *Telegraph* for Miss Finley's notice of the performance. She found it quickly. The article was two columns long.

"Front page!" Madge exclaimed, passing the paper before Evelyn's face so that they might look at it together. "Isn't that great?"

"What does Miss Finley say about us?" Evelyn asked.

"Read!" Madge cried, tragically, as she herself rapidly scanned the columns.

Miss Finley, they were disappointed to see, had devoted a large portion of the article to a description of the audience, which, according to her account, contained "the cream of Boston's fashion and culture." She then went on to describe Mrs. Stevenson's grounds, devoting the second half of the last column to praise of the actors, two-thirds of which was given to Evelyn and Harold Seymour. She dismissed Helen Gordon with the remark that Celia had been played with Miss Gordon's "well-known brilliancy," and she said of Madge's Phæbe that it had "all the charm of rustic beauty."

"Well, if that ain't mean!" said Madge, when she had finished reading the article. "'All the charm of rustic beauty!' That woman just makes me tired. She don't know what acting is. And she can't write for a cent. But how she has lathered it on to you and Harold!" After a moment Madge

went on: "Well, it's splendid for you anyway. I think I'll send this to Saunderson, after all. It can't do me any harm, and it may do you some good. Let's see what the other papers have to say."

The other papers gave much less space to the performance. They all had warm praise for Evelyn's Rosalind, however; one enthusiastic critic went so far as to declare "she deserved to rank among the leading actresses on the boards to-day." Several of them referred in a complimentary way to Madge, but two ignored her altogether.

"Well," said Madge, with a sigh, when they had finished reading, "there ain't so much glory in this thing as I thought there'd be. But it's been good sport just the same. Now I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to gather up all these papers, and I'm going to send 'em to Saunderson, and I'm going to send him a letter saying you were just out of sight, an' if he knows what he's about he'll sign you right off for 'Deception.'"

"But do you think it would do any good?" said

Evelyn.

"Do any good! Well, ain't you complimentary?"

"You know what I mean."

"Oh, yes, I know. I'm not touchy like you. If Saunderson hasn't got anybody for the part yet I'll bet he'll be glad to take you. I can tell from the book it would suit you down to the ground."

XXI.

THE next morning Harold Seymour called at Appleby Terrace to take his friends down for a swim. He found Evelyn and Madge in the parlour.

"Where's Mrs. Bowen and the dear boys?" Madge asked.

"The boys are down at the boathouse," said Evelyn, "and I suppose Mrs. Bowen is up in her room writing. She's always writing nowadays. I'll call her."

Mrs. Bowen was persuaded to give up her labours for a time. She sat on the beach, while the others dressed.

"Just think," said Madge to Evelyn, as they were about to leave the bath-house for the water, "to-morrow I shall be home again — to-night for that matter. I wonder if Jimmy'll be glad. I'll just give it to him for not coming to see me do Phœbe."

"Don't be hard on him, Madge," Evelyn urged.

"Oh, how you talk. As if you were so forgiving yourself."

Evelyn flushed and said nothing.

"Say, why don't you take him back?" Madge went on. "Can't you see that he's just dying for you?" As Evelyn made no reply, Madge went on:

"M'm! It don't do to treat men very long as you've been treating him this summer. Most men



would have kicked long ago. Still, I know what fun it is just to tantalise a man."

"I'm not tantalising him," said Evelyn, resentfully.

"Now, my dear!"

"What do you mean?"

"I know you're awful good, Evelyn," Madge laughed. "But don't you think yourself you're just the least bit of a flirt?"

"How can you say such things, Madge?"

"Oh, now, don't get mad. But you know you have — you have played him with Mr. Webb."

"Madge!"

"There you are again. If you ain't touchy! Now tell me the truth. Haven't you — haven't you tried to make him just a little jealous, just the least bit, you know?"

Evelyn looked at her friend despairingly. "I don't know what has put these ideas into your head; but they're ridiculous. And how can you connect my name with Mr. Webb's — with the name of a married man?"

Her eyes filled with tears, and Madge exclaimed: "Oh, I didn't mean anything, really. I didn't mean anything. I was just fooling. Oh, I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry. Please don't cry, dear, please don't."

When they entered the water they found that it was unusually warm. As Evelyn struck out from the shore, a familiar voice asked: "Are you trying to get away from us?"

"I feel like swimming over to Europe," she replied, without turning her head.

With his long, regular strokes Seymour soon over-took her.

"I wish you wouldn't follow me," she said.

"It isn't safe for you to go out far."

She kept on slowly breasting the waves. He swam on one side a little ahead of her, and looked into her face. She was determined to shake him off if possible. She did not like his tone of authority. For a moment they said nothing; she made hard work of swimming.

"You've got a promise to keep with me," he said, at last. "You know what it is, don't you?"

"Yes," she replied, sputtering out a mouthful of salt water. "But — the — this — isn't the time to speak of it."

"This is as good a time as any, it seems to me, and the circumstances are quite romantic."

"You must let me think a little longer."

"What good will that do?"

"I don't know my own mind." She swallowed another mouthful of water; it made her sputter again and cough.

"It's a very simple matter. Just tell me that we're engaged again, and we can manage the details afterward."

"I can't, I can't." She tried to hold her head out of the water, so as not to get a third mouthful. "I'm all confused. I've begun to see things differently lately. You must give me time to think."

"Ah, I see," he said, with a sarcastic inflection that was new to him. "Perhaps you've met some one you like better, some one more talented, some one —"

"How can you talk to me so?" she cried, vehemently, forgetting in her agitation to hold up her head, and swallowing more of the water. But for



her conversation with Madge, she would have thought nothing of the remark.

"I didn't mean to offend you," he said, humbly.

"Don't ever repeat such a thing as that to me," she cried, this time managing her head so as to avoid the waves. "I know what you meant. I understand better than you imagine."

"I didn't mean anything in particular. I certainly didn't mean to hurt your feelings."

For several moments they swam on in silence.

"You'll tire yourself out," said Seymour, at last. "Do turn back, won't you. The people on the beach will get frightened. You know how timid Mrs. Bowen is."

"Mrs. Bowen has confidence in me. I wish you wouldn't follow. I'm quite able to take care of myself."

"Well, if I turn back will you turn back soon?"
"I shall turn sooner than I would if you fol-

lowed."

"All right then, I'll go back." He turned around, but he simply floated and watched her as she went on. He could see Mrs. Bowen waving her parasol from the shore. He did not dare follow Evelyn, for fear of inciting her to keep on. So he swam in a circle, occasionally lying on his back, and then treading water. Finally, after going some distance beyond him, she turned and looked toward the shore. He thought he detected an expression of dismay in her face. Instead of swimming toward her, he waited for her to come up. He noticed that her lips were purple.

"Are you all right?" he said.

For a moment she did not reply; then she gasped: " Yes."

He swam up to her: "If you're tired, just put your hand on me."

"I feel weak and sick." She clutched at his arm. "It's that — that water I've swallowed."

"Just rest your left hand on this shoulder," he said, quietly, "and we'll swim along together. Don't exert yourself. Only make the motions. Be sure and keep your feet moving. There! Now we're all right."

"Oh, that's better," she said. "I don't know what's the matter with me. I'm so cold. The water's changed, hasn't it?"

"Perhaps so."

"And I feel so ill. I wonder if we'll ever get back."

"Of course we shall," he replied, putting fresh energy into his stroke.

For a few moments she was silent. Then she said: "It was very foolish."

"It's all right; no harm done."

"My strength is going," she whispered. They were moving with the waves now, and she could speak without gulping down water.

"You mustn't let go."

"I'm afraid I'm going to faint."

"Don't faint till vou get on shore. Then you can faint as much as you like."

"Oh, I know I shall die. I shall be drowned."

"You will if you talk all your strength away," he exclaimed, "and so shall I; for if you go to the bottom, I'll go too. Now keep quiet and we'll get back all right. Keep your feet moving if you



possibly can, and don't let go your hold. If you do we're both gone."

Her strength she retained by a strong effort of will. She realised how dear life was to her, how dear those were that she loved, and chiefly how dear Harold Seymour was; all her doubts seemed foolish now; she wanted to live and she wanted his love. She would have liked to tell him that she loved him. But she hadn't strength enough to speak; she could only cling to him with conflicting feelings of horror and happiness. She moved mechanically through the water; and when at last his feet touched the shore, and he told her they were all right now, she felt a delicious feeling of joy, and she fainted.

They had come back so quietly, without sign of effort, that Mrs. Bowen, who had been watching them, suspected no trouble till they saw Seymour take Evelyn in his arms and carry her out of the water. Ned Osgood stood a short distance away, giving Madge a lesson in swimming, and the Stearns boys were swimming beside her. When Evelyn reached the beach her friend on shore was ready to receive her, and her other friends were clustering in dripping garments around her.

"It's nothing, nothing," said Seymour, noticing Mrs. Bowen's white face. "She's fainted, that's all. If we only had some brandy."

"I'll go up to the house and get some," said Ned. Then he looked down at his bathing-suit and hesitated.

"I've got some," said Seymour. "Here, Roscoe," he went on, taking his key from off his neck, "you'll find it in my back pocket."

Evelyn still gave no sign of life.

"Bring her up to the bath-house," said Mrs. Bowen. "She'll come to in a minute."

As Seymour carried Evelyn, Madge ran ahead and opened the door of the bath-room. Soon after Seymour left his burden with Mrs. Bowen and Madge, Roscoe reappeared, panting, and bearing in his hand a silver flask which he passed to Madge.

The door was kept open to give the sufferer air, and the soaked and limp figures of Seymour and the boys stood sheepishly outside.

"Well, we don't look very dignified," said Sey-

mour, with a laugh.

"She'll be all right in a few minutes, I guess," said Roscoe. "Let's go and dress."

As the boys walked to their rooms Seymour lingered near the door. He could hear Madge giving directions; she seemed to command the situation. "Here, swallow this right down. It'll do you good. Dear me, she won't swallow. But we must make her. Here, Mrs. Bowen, never mind that for a minute. There it goes. She's swallowing it. Now just see if she won't come to. See! She ain't so pale now. Her eyes are opening. Just another sip of this, dear. Now let's take these wet things off soon's we can, and give her a good rubbing. Ouick. quick. There. Ah! see, there's life again! She's all right. Don't be afraid, dear. What? What did you say? Mr. Seymour? Yes, he's all right. I don't know where he is. He's gone to his room to dress, I s'pose. The brandy? Give him some? I didn't think he'd need it. Here, Mrs. Bowen, take this bottle and give it to Mr. Sevmour, if he's out there. But be sure an' bring it back."

Seymour beat a hasty retreat. Mrs. Bowen saw



him, however, and offered him the bottle. He took a mouthful of the brandy.

- "How is she?" he asked.
- "Much better," replied Mrs. Bowen, turning hastily away. "She's coming to, fast."

XXII.

FROM Evelyn's appearance after she was dressed, no one would have suspected that she had just passed through an ordeal. She felt weak, however, and she was eager to go home and rest.

Harold Seymour and the boys were waiting for her. Seymour said she had been paid back for wanting to become the champion long-distance swimmer of Cohasset, and he consoled her by explaining that great athletes often fainted after their stunts. In presence of her friends, he refused to take any credit to himself for the help he had given her; but it was really the chance of helping her that made him so happy.

When they arrived home, Evelyn found Mr. Marble waiting for Seymour. One of his friends, the owner of the Fanny, the big sloop-yacht lying off Cohasset, had invited several of the men who had taken part in the performance the day before to go off for a trip. Seymour would go, of course. And did Evelyn think that Mr. Webb would join them? Evelyn replied that she couldn't answer for Mr. Webb, and Seymour volunteered to telephone the invitation; but he rubbed his back hair and said he didn't believe he cared to go himself. He looked wistfully at Evelyn.

"Go by all means," she said. "Don't stay on



my account. I should be sorry if I thought I had kept you from going."

This settled the matter, and he said, half-reluctantly, that Mr. Marble might count on him.

A few minutes after reaching her room, Evelyn was sound asleep. She did not wake again till three o'clock. The rest refreshed her, and she felt able to get up and go down-stairs; she was still so nervous that she could not bear to be alone. When she entered the parlour she found Mrs. Bowen and Madge.

"Why, I thought you were asleep," Mrs. Bowen exclaimed.

"How do you feel, now?" asked Madge, taking Evelyn's hand in both of her own. "You see I haven't gone," Madge said, with a laugh. "I couldn't till I knew you were all right."

A moment later, Madge ran out into the diningroom, and she soon reappeared with a large cup of coffee and a plate of toast.

"I've had these kept for you," she said. "I knew you'd be hungry when you woke up."

Evelyn was not hungry, but she tried to drink the coffee. While she was struggling with it, Mrs. Appleby appeared at the door.

"Well, for the land's sake. So the child's down again. You dear thing!" After kissing Evelyn, Mrs. Appleby went on: "It's too much work, my lady. It's that theatrical business in hot weather. That's what made you sick."

Evelyn turned to Madge. "Now that you've missed your boat, you must stay over another day."

"Poor Jimmy!" sighed Madge, who was very willing to stay. "He'll wait for train after train."



- "Can't you telegraph?"
- "I s'pose I could."
- "One of the boys will take the message to the office for you."
- "I'll go look for 'em," said Madge, jumping up from her seat, and hurrying out on the porch.

Evelyn glanced out of the window, and saw Harold Seymour approaching. He stopped a moment to speak with Madge and the boys on the porch, and then he entered the parlour. He walked very slowly as if his legs were heavy; his face was red and his eyes seemed veiled in a yellow film.

"So you're all right again, I see," he said, with a forced smile. "Ah, Mrs. Bowen." He bowed scrupulously, and dropped with a thud into a chair beside Evelyn.

"I was just going up-stairs," said Mrs. Bowen. "I know you want to see Evelyn," she added, skilfully, turning to Seymour.

"Are you feeling better?" he asked, when they were alone.

"Yes, much better," Evelyn replied, quietly.

"I'm glad it happened," he said.

"Are you? I'm not. It was a dreadful experience. It makes me shudder to think of it."

"But it brings you — it brings you nearer to me. You belong to me now," he continued, with a smile.

"Belong to you?" Her eyes grew a shade darker.

"Yes; I've saved your life," he said, with the air of making a joke. "When the hero in the novels saves the life of the heroine, doesn't she always have to marry him?"

For a moment she looked at him without speak-



ing. Then she said: "Did you come here to say that to me?"

"I came first to see how you were. I didn't want to go off on the yacht without asking for you. But now that I'm here, I want to ask for your answer. You promised, you know."

"I want more time."

"You're always saying that. Haven't you had time enough already?" he went on, his face growing more flushed. "And haven't you any gratitude for what I've done for you?"

He extended his hands, as if to clasp her in his arms.

"Stop," she said, her eyes flashing. "Don't touch me. Don't you know that your very presence here now is an insult to me?"

"An insult?" he said, with a dazed look.

"Yes, an insult. It shows that you have no respect for me. No man would call on a woman he respected when he was drunk."

"Drunk!" he repeated, rising from his seat and clutching the back of the chair. "I'm not drunk!"

"I don't care to discuss that question with you," she said, rising, too. "Oh, don't think I'm without gratitude," she went on, with tears in her eyes. "I am not. But you hurt me, you hurt me more than — more than I can tell you by coming here like this."

He stared at her helplessly for a moment. "Then I'll go," he said, quietly.

He took her hand impressively, and tried to look into her eyes. "I thought you had more heart," he whispered. Then he turned and left the room, and



she saw him walking down the path toward the beach.

For a moment she stood where he had left her. trying to control herself. She felt a complete revulsion against him, and her loathing seemed the greater on account of the warmth of her feeling for him in the morning. His service to her had been a mere trick: he had forced her to overexert herself in the water in order to make a theatrical display of his own heroism. But for him she would not have had the illness and fright. Oh, that was the way he had treated her ever since she became engaged to him; he had brought mortification and misery upon her, and then he had tried to win sympathy for himself by mock repentance and by posing as a martyr. And when he had done this, why couldn't he have left her in peace? But, instead, he had pursued her here so that he might heap additional insult upon her. What had she done that her life should be made one long misery? Other girls that she knew weren't obliged to suffer as she had suffered. She lived over again the months since she met the man who had won her love and then had tortured her for having given it to him. She couldn't bear it any longer; she had been too patient. That he, of all people, should have so little respect for her! She pitied women that were married to such men. But she would profit by the lesson he had given her. would teach him there was at least one woman that could make him respect her. Nothing in the world could tempt her to marry him now!

XXIII.

Mrs. Bowen must have been waiting somewhere on the ground floor, probably in the dining-room; for no sooner had Seymour left the house than she returned to the parlour. This move was one of the finest expressions of her tact; she feared that Evelyn would go to her room and give way to tears, and she hoped, by keeping her down-stairs, to prevent this disaster. Mrs. Bowen believed that in most cases tears not only gave no relief, but were an additional pain. On the details of life, Mrs. Bowen had spent a great deal of thought, and she now had a definite theory for nearly every social emergency.

She found Evelyn standing at the window with an expression of misery in her face. "Has he gone?" she asked.

Evelyn turned quickly. "Yes, he's gone. I hope he'll never come back."

"Don't say that, dear. I'm afraid you're uncharitable, Evelyn."

"Uncharitable!" Evelyn repeated, scornfully. "I suppose he does need a great deal of charity."

"He has been with Mr. Marble and some other men, probably. Don't you know men are obliged to drink sometimes? Mr. Bowen has told me all about it. At first I couldn't understand it. It seemed to

me impossible that civilised human beings should act like that. But I understand now. It's the way men show their friendliness for one another, almost the only way."

Evelyn kept looking out of the window.

"Think of being married to a man that would—that would come home drunk."

"He wouldn't if you were married to him. Don't you know, that's what good women are for, to help men fight against these temptations? Besides, he wasn't drunk, really. I noticed."

"Oh, I can't make those distinctions. He had been drinking—a great deal. That was enough. It was an insult for him to come here, an insult to me."

"Did you tell him so?"

" Yes."

"You couldn't have said anything worse. That hurts a man like him more than anything else."

"It was true."

"He didn't mean to insult you. You know he worships you. That shows there's a great deal of good in him. There are not many men in the world that care for women as — as strict as you are."

Mrs. Bowen detected a subtle change in Evelyn's attitude.

"Do you really think I'm strict?"

"Very. Too strict. You haven't learned to make allowances yet. Most women don't till they're married. Then they realise how much men have to struggle against."

"Women have to struggle too."

"Yes, but it's different. They're protected. It's made easier for them."

- "Oh, I can't compromise in that way," Evelyn broke out. "What's right is right, and what's wrong is wrong."
- "That's a great mistake, my dear. You'll find it out sometime. What's right in the judgment of the world is often wrong, and what's wrong is often right. It all depends."
 - "Depends on what?"
- "Circumstances. It's foolish to judge every-body and everything by an iron rule. Now, even you are inconsistent. There's Mr. Marble. He sometimes drinks. But you don't despise him. You like him."
 - "But I wouldn't marry him."
- "So you'd marry only a perfect man. Well, dear, I hope you'll find him."

Mrs. Bowen sat down beside the table in the middle of the room and began to turn over the leaves of a magazine. From the window Evelyn had a view of the ocean to the horizon's edge. The wind was blowing whitecaps on the waves. The sky had the colour of the dark sea. In the north a black cloud was rising ominously. Evelyn remembered that on just such a day the summer before a fearful storm had broken over Cohasset.

"I wonder if they'll go out," she said. "It looks like rain."

Mrs. Bowen went to the window.

- "Oh, I don't believe it'll be anything. That cloud won't come near us."
- "If Mr. Webb goes with them and they get caught in a storm his wife will be terribly frightened."
 - "Do you suppose he really will go?" Mrs.

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Bowen looked out again. "It does look rather dark over there."

"Perhaps they'll postpone it. They will if they're in their senses."

Mrs. Bowen smiled. "Oh, I guess they'll be all right," she said, with a carelessness that appeared assumed.

"Mr. Marble is terribly reckless. He'd go out in a tempest." Evelyn looked anxious. She turned from the window and started to go up-stairs.

"Don't you want to read this story to me?" asked Mrs. Bowen, holding up the magazine. "My eyes are so weak to-day that I'm afraid to use them. That is, if you haven't anything else to do."

"No, I haven't," said Evelyn, dropping listlessly into a chair. "I'll be glad to read it. Whose is it? Oh, Thayer's. I haven't read one of his short stories for a long time. I wonder if there's any chance for me in 'Deception'? It's pretty late now. I'm afraid there isn't. Dear me, if something doesn't come soon, I don't know what I shall do."

Presently Madge and the Stearns boys came into the parlour. They took seats quietly and listened to the reading; Madge amused herself by conducting across the room a mock flirtation with Gerald.

"Where's Ned, Roscoe?" asked Mrs. Bowen,

when Evelyn had finished.

"He's gone out with Mr. Seymour and Mr. Webb on the yacht."

"Wouldn't they take you, too?"

"Yes, but we thought we wouldn't go," Roscoe replied, looking confused.

"They're going to have a great time," said Madge. "You ought to have seen the kegs they've

taken with 'em. I saw the team going down to the beach before they started off."

"I'm afraid they'll get caught," said Gerald, going to the window. "It's pretty dark over there. Just see how rough the water is."

They all gathered at the window. Evelyn noticed that the cloud in the north now covered a wide patch of sky. The water had taken a deeper blue, and the waves were tossing spray in the air.

"They can't have gone far in such a short time," said Mrs. Bowen.

Roscoe turned to her. "Oh, yes, they can. There's a great breeze."

"It's raining out on the water," said Gerald. "See that sheet of rain off there just in front of Minot's. By Jove! that little sloop's catching it. If those fellows aren't careful they'll go — See that? Wasn't that a close call? It looks like the Nautilus! Ah, here she comes. See those raindrops on the window. Now we're in for it."

"Oh, I hope they're all right," said Mrs. Bowen, with anxiety in her tone, and in her face a look of consternation.

Evelyn had grown pale. Madge was silent.

"It won't be anything," said Roscoe, reassuringly. "They've got a good skipper aboard."

"But those kegs," Mrs. Bowen whispered.

"Don't fret," he laughed.

"I've heard the storms around here are something terrible," said Madge.

The storm that followed was severe, even for the New England coast. The thunder soon began to crash. Roscoe and Gerald, in spite of Mrs. Bowen's protests, stood at the window watching the A Daughter of Thespis 🧇 163

waves as they swept over Minot's Light, and enjoying the fantastic play of the lightning. In the midst of the confusion Mrs. Appleby entered, followed by her husband. Several of the other boarders rushed down-stairs, and two ran in from outside dripping wet, choosing to herd with their fellow beings until the storm was over, rather than go to their rooms and put on dry clothes. One of the thunder-claps came simultaneously with the flash, and for a moment they thought the cottage had been struck. Afterward they found that one side of a barn two miles away had been splintered. storm maintained its fierceness for about a halfhour, then the thunder grew intermittent, and the rain poured.

While they were just feeling a delicious relief after the nervous strain, they heard a sharp rap. Gerald opened the front door, and they heard a voice ask: "Is Mr. Webb here?"

Mrs. Bowen and Evelyn exchanged glances, and both looked startled. Before they had time to speak, Mrs. Webb stood at the door of the parlour. She was muffled from head to foot in a heavy cloak, and her face, shrouded in a hood, was deathly white. Her dark eyes were gleaming. She looked around the room, and on seeing Evelyn, she said: "Where is my husband?"

Evelyn turned pale. She rose from her seat and said, weakly: "I don't know. I think —"

"He went out on the yacht," said Mrs. Bowen, rousing herself with an effort. "But I'm sure he's all right. They have a professional seaman with them." The expression, "professional seaman," sounded ridiculous, but no one smiled: they all rec-



ognised it as a desperate invention of Mrs. Bowen's, made to reassure the excited woman.

"He's probably drowned by this time," Mrs. Webb wailed.

Mrs. Bowen replied: "Do sit down, won't you, Mrs. Webb? Aren't you wet through?"

"I don't care whether I'm wet through or not," said Mrs. Webb. "I want my husband. He's gone off on that yacht with some of your actor-friends, Miss Johnson. You are to blame for it. He wouldn't have gone but for you. He's never done such a thing before in his life. To leave me at such a time and go off with a lot of disreputable characters."

Evelyn was unable to speak. She wondered why she did not feel angry; probably because she pitied Mrs. Webb more than she pitied herself. Mrs. Bowen looked utterly helpless; her tact was not equal to this emergency. An ominous silence followed.

Then Mrs. Appleby spoke up: "I can't have you talk so to one of my guests. I don't care who you are, either. You have no right to come here and talk so "

Mrs. Webb glanced disdainfully at Mrs. Appleby's plump figure; she did not reply. Mr. Appleby, who was sitting beside his wife, had shrunk into welldressed insignificance; since his entrance into the room he seemed to have grown much smaller.

"I thought my husband might be here," said Mrs. Webb, turning to Mrs. Bowen, and speaking more calmly. "I'll go down to the beach and see if I can't find out something about him there."

"Won't you let one of the boys go for you?



You'll catch cold, I'm afraid. Roscoe, you'll go, won't you?"

"No, I'll go myself. I can't rest easy till I get news. Some of the yachts must have gone over in this storm."

"Go with her, Roscoe. Go with her," cried Mrs. Bowen, desperately, as Mrs. Webb turned to leave the house.

Roscoe hesitated for a moment. Then he dashed from the room, seized his hat from the rack in the hall, and hurried out of the front door into the rain.

XXIV.

EVELYN left the parlour in tears. Mrs. Bowen followed, and tried to soothe her. She ought to realise that Mrs. Webb was half-crazy and not responsible for what she had said, Mrs. Bowen insisted. But it took a long time to pacify her.

The rain ceased, the sun came out again, and shone fiercely into Mrs. Bowen's room. Evelyn at first refused to return to the parlour; but Mrs. Bowen persuaded her. Some of the boarders were gathered on the porch discussing the ravages of the storm. A large tree near the cottage had been half-uprooted, and in one of the neighbouring houses several panes of glass had been smashed. Madge and Gerald had gone down to the beach. Mrs. Bowen suggested that she and Evelyn join them, and in a few moments they were down at the boat-house where Seymour had a locker. His rowboat had been hauled into the house by the boatman, and his little sloop was gracefully riding the waves near the landing. They found their friends with Mrs. Webb and Roscoe on the porch. Mrs. Webb was holding a large sea-glass to her eyes, and was looking in the direction in which the boatman was pointing.

"That's the boat, ma'am. Sure they's nothing to be worried about. She's making straight for home."

"I can't see who are on it," said Mrs. Webb. "But there are several of them. See, they're turning about. Why are they doing that?" "I don't know, ma'am," the boatman replied.

They could plainly see the yacht in the distance, not far from Minot's. For several moments they watched it without speaking. Instead of making for the shore, as the boatman had said, it was going round and round in a circle. Yet it was under control.

"What are they doing that for?" said Mrs. Webb.

"P'raps they're lookin' for something," the boatman suggested.

"Looking for something," repeated Mrs. Webb, who clung to the boatman's glass without taking her eyes from it. "What can they be looking for - unless some one has been swept overboard?" Finally she laid down the glasses on a seat and held her hand at her forehead. "I feel sick," she said, sinking into a chair.

"If we only had some of Mr. Seymour's brandy," said Madge to Mrs. Bowen.

The boatman overheard her. "I've got a bottle here," he said.

He went back among the lockers and speedily returned with a black bottle and a small tumbler half-filled with water.

"Give it to me," said Madge.

A moment later, Mrs. Webb said she felt better. The rain and the dampness had chilled her. No, she wouldn't go back to Appleby Terrace or to her own house, either. She would stay right there till that boat came in. There was something the matter;



that was plain enough. Perhaps her husband had been swept overboard during the storm. She'd never forgive herself for allowing him to go out. She hadn't wanted him to go, anyway.

Madge waved her handkerchief in the direction of the yacht. For several moments the signals were not noticed; then an answer was given by some one in the bow. After moving in half-circles for several minutes longer, the yacht was turned slowly in the direction of the shore.

"Thank God," said Mrs. Webb, fervently, "they're coming at last. I think that was my husband who waved. We shall be able to tell in a few moments." But she did not offer to give up the glasses.

"Won't you take some more of this brandy, Mrs. Webb?" said Madge. "Your lips are getting purple again."

Mrs. Webb clung to the glasses while she took another sip of brandy. "I must try to keep my strength up, I suppose. I know I shall be sick from this adventure. But I don't care if my husband is safe." She put her eyes to the glasses once more, and held them there as if they were glued to the lenses. "I shall be able to distinguish them in just a moment," she said, excitedly. "They're ever so much more distinct now. Yes, — it is, it's Oswald. Thank Heaven, he's safe."

"Can you make out Mr. Seymour?" said Evelyn. She was almost beside herself with anxiety, and she felt as if she were in a fever.

"I don't know," replied Mrs. Webb. "I'm not familiar enough with his looks."

"Won't you let us take the glasses?" asked Mrs.



Bowen, with as much politeness as she could summon under the circumstances. In the past few moments she had conceived an intense dislike for Mrs. Webb.

"Oh, certainly," said Mrs. Webb, passing the glasses to Mrs. Bowen, but without apologising.

Mrs. Bowen gave them at once to Evelyn, who put them with trembling hands to her eyes. After some trouble, caused by her nervousness, Evelyn succeeded in adjusting them properly. By this time the boat was so near that those on board could be almost distinguished from the shore.

"I can see the faces quite plainly," said Evelyn, speaking quickly and in a dry tone, as if her throat were parched. "There's Mr. Webb and Ned and Mr. Marble and some men I don't know. But — I — I can't see Mr. Seymour."

"He's in the cabin probably," said Roscoe.

Evelyn passed the glasses to Roscoe. "You look." She had grown pale.

Roscoe looked steadily for a moment. "Do you see him?" asked Mrs. Bowen.

"No," he replied, quietly. "He must be in the cabin. Perhaps he was seasick."

"He's a good sailor," said Evelyn.

The glasses were passed from one to the other. No one could distinguish Seymour.

They sat in silence. Mrs. Webb looked sympathetically at Evelyn; every moment brought the yacht nearer; it was making direct for the boathouse. They could not go down on the float, for it was almost submerged in water. No one had spirit enough to wave a handkerchief.

When the boat came within hailing distance,

Roscoe cried: "Are you all right?" Mr. Webb and Ned waved their hands. In landing at the float they had to step into several inches of water; Ned was the first to leave the boat, and he was followed by Oswald Webb and by Mr. Marble. They all hurried up to the porch. Mrs. Webb threw her arms around her husband's neck.

"What are you doing here, Constance?" he said, sternly. "Don't you know that you are risking your life by coming out on such a day?"

"I don't care," she replied. "I was beside myself.

I'll never let you out of my sight again."

Mr. Marble and Ned were standing before Evelyn and Mrs. Bowen. The comedian was mopping his brow, and Ned was explaining that they had had "a tough time."

"Where is Mr. Seymour?" said Evelyn. "Why don't you tell us where he is? Is he safe?"

Mr. Marble looked helplessly at Ned; but Ned remained silent. Evelyn turned appealingly to Oswald Webb.

"Has anything happened to Mr. Seymour?"

"Yes," he said, looking her in the face.

"Is he — is he drowned?"

"I'm afraid so."

She continued to look at him for a moment. Then she turned to Mrs. Bowen, "Let us go back to the house."

Mrs. Bowen put one arm around her waist. "How did it happen?" she asked, turning to Oswald Webb.

"It was just after the storm struck us. We didn't put about quickly enough. Mr. Seymour was out on the bow. I suppose that a wave struck him



and he lost his hold. We didn't know it for a few moments. The rain was blinding."

"And you — you haven't found him?" asked Mrs. Bowen, as she walked to the door of the boathouse.

" No."

When they had passed out of the door Mrs. Bowen and Evelyn started up the hill.

"Can't I do anything for you?" Webb asked.

Evelyn shook her head. "Nothing, thank you." They walked slowly. Oswald Webb and Ned had been drenched, and Mrs. Webb began to complain of the wetting she had received. On the way Ned gave Madge an account of his experience. Before they left it had looked like rain, and Mr. Webb suggested that the trip be postponed, or that they wait for a half-hour or so to see whether the storm was really coming or not. But Seymour was eager to start at once; he declared that he hoped they should have a "rip-roaring tempest." So off they went, and they had gone about half-way to Minot's when the storm broke. The skipper seemed to have lost his head; he had been drinking in the morning with some of the men up at The Wetmore. He might have put back easily enough; but, instead, he turned the boat out to sea. Seymour worked every minute; he was the only one that didn't seem to be frightened. The skipper called out that some one would have to go forward and attend to the jib, and Seymour started for the bow. That was all any one knew about him; there was a fearful sea on; half the time, it seemed to Ned. they were up in the clouds and the other half down in the centre of the earth. The boat went along like

an express train, only a thousand times faster, and the sea kept surging round them and sweeping over them. Mr. Marble grew scared and began to pray out loud and groan. Mr. Webb was the coolest; he was the one who discovered Seymour's absence. The skipper said they couldn't go back; but Mr. Webb stood up and said that if the vessel wasn't put about he'd pitch the skipper overboard and take the tiller himself. So they turned; but not a sign could be seen of Seymour. The sea was running high, and the lightning flashed around them; they saw it strike in several places on the shore; with every flash and every thunder-clap Mr. Marble groaned and prayed louder. It was wonderful how the boat weathered the storm; they had to hold on the gunwale to save themselves from being pitched over; many times Ned felt sure they should never rise out of the sea again. They hovered around the spot where they supposed Seymour had fallen until the tempest had passed; then they found that, in spite of themselves, they had been driven out to So they went back; but of course it was no use; they found nothing, not even his hat.

Ned finished his narrative as they approached Appleby Terrace. Mrs. Appleby was standing on the porch with the sailor-cap on her head. She had divined that something serious had happened.

"We will push right on home," said Webb to Evelyn and Mrs. Bowen. When he and his wife had overtaken them, he added: "We are very sorry. Of course, you know that." He looked at Evelyn sympathetically. Mrs. Webb said nothing; her sole desire seemed to be to take her husband home and to keep him there.

Mrs. Bowen at once led Evelyn up to her room, and, placing her in a big chair near the window, began to remove her wraps. Evelyn sat quietly, and looked around as if the place were unfamiliar.

"Why don't you cry?" said Mrs. Bowen, des-Tears were running down her own perately. cheeks.

"I can't," said Evelyn.

"Don't you care?" asked Mrs. Bowen, with the hope of forcing tears. She was frightened by this stony calmness.

"Yes, I care. I care very much."

"Then try to cry. Try, dear, try."

Evelyn looked away and shook her head. "I am to blame," she whispered.

"To blame? Nonsense."

"I sent him away. He wouldn't have gone if I hadn't been so — if I hadn't spoken to him like that."

"He would have gone anyway."

"I heard Ned tell as he came up the hill. You thought I didn't hear. But I did — everything. I made him reckless."

Suddenly Evelyn began to tremble, and Mrs. Bowen knew the reaction had come. For several moments Evelvn struggled, trying to catch her breath. Then she covered her face with her hands and burst out sobbing.

XXV.

The next day they found Harold Seymour's body; it had been cast up on the shore at Scituate. Mr. Marble took charge of it; he knew the address of Seymour's sister in England; Seymour had often said he wished to be buried at home, with his people.

The accident was discussed in the newspapers for several days, and Seymour's history was rehearsed; all the critics agreed that he had given as much promise as any of the younger men on the stage. Miss Finley wrote a vivid, but an entirely imaginary account of the way he had been swept from the boat, and she gave a detailed description of the narrow escape of the whole party, founded chiefly on what Ned told her: she seemed also to have gathered anecdotes about Harold Seymour from nearly every one in Cohasset who had known him; these kept appearing from day to day. Among other things, she boldly declared that, at the time of his death, Seymour had been engaged to the "brilliant and accomplished young actress, Miss Evelyn Johnson, who, only the other day, made such a charming Rosalind to his delightful rendering of Orlando," and that they were to have married before the end of the summer.

On the morning after Seymour's death, Evelyn received a letter from Mrs. Freeman, saying that

Saunderson wanted her for the part of Mathilde in "Deception." She had decided to remain in bed all day, and the news came while she was trying to drink the coffee Madge had brought up for her. Without speaking, she gave Madge the letter to read, and when the girl had deciphered Mrs. Freeman's business scrawl, she threw her arms round Evelyn's neck.

"You see the world hasn't come to an end yet," she said.

"I suppose I ought to be glad," Evelyn remarked. "I should have been a few days ago. But now I don't care."

"You don't care whether you starve or not. Is that what you mean?",

"Yes. I think I'd rather starve — if anything."

"Well, please don't begin now. Just eat that toast and drink that coffee. It's all on account of the performance the other day. And I haven't sent Saunderson the papers either. Perhaps the Boston notices did it. They were short, but the one in the *Item* gave you a great puff. Seventy-five a week! Well, that ain't bad. I'm only gett'n' forty-five, and I ain't kicking."

"It's what I've been hoping for all these weeks. I wonder why I don't feel glad over it. I never do when I get what I've been wanting for a long time."

"Well, you're awfully lucky, that's all I can say. Of course you'll take it."

"I've got to take something."

"Mrs. Freeman says to wire Saunderson, don't she? Yes, 'Wire Saunderson and he'll send on the part.' Well, you'd better do it right off. Want



me to write the message for you. I'll give it to Ned."

Madge seized paper and pencil from one of the bureau drawers and proceeded to write on Evelyn's dressing-table. "What shall I say? I'd be just a little reserved, as if I'd had a lot of other offers about as good. How about, 'Decided to accept. Terms a little low. Can't you make it a hundred?' No, that's too long. Besides, it's thirteen words, too, and it might be a hoodoo. We mustn't have more than ten words. This would be better. 'Decided to accept. Terms low. Make it a hundred.' That's only nine words, and it's very business-like."

Evelyn shook her head. "They would get some one else. The terms are very good. You said so yourself a minute ago."

"Oh," said Madge, with disgust, "you ain't got any more business in you! Of course, it's good. But get all you can, I say."

"Just write: 'Accept, terms satisfactory.' Just 'Accept' alone would do."

"Only three words!" exclaimed Madge. "Why, it don't cost any more to send ten. Think of what you're wasting."

"But that's all I have to say. That covers it all."

Saunderson's offer gave Evelyn fresh energy and determination; in spite of Madge's protests, she dressed and went down-stairs. She first told Mrs. Bowen about the offer. Mrs. Bowen was deep in literary work, preparing a minute account of the events of the previous day for her husband.

When she heard the news she cried with the air of a prophetess: "It's a compensation. These things are always happening. You'll be sure to

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have good luck now, because you've had such bad luck."

The boarders were surprised to see Evelyn downstairs again. Like Madge, they had expected her to remain in retirement for what they regarded as a suitable interval. After the first shock of hearing of Seymour's death, she had too much good sense to blame herself; but she thought that she owed him some self-inflicted punishment for the way she had treated him. Her friends in Cohasset were at a loss how to express sympathy for her; in spite of Miss Finley's announcement, they knew the engagement had been broken, and they soon heard that it had not been renewed; some of them referred to the matter before her in an impersonal way; others thought it more delicate to ignore it altogether. Helen Gordon, however, felt no such sensibility; she called on Evelyn on the afternoon of the next day and spoke her mind freely.

"After all," she said, "perhaps it's for the best. Of course, you would have married him. You know you would have given in before the summer was over. But you and he weren't a bit suited to each other. I don't believe in professionals marrying each other, anyway. I've made up my mind after I get my divorce not to marry an actor. Think of all the unhappy marriages on the stage that we know! Mr. Seymour would have been playing in New York while you were off on the road, and you'd just be eaten up with jealousy. That is, unless you left the stage. And you know you wouldn't be happy off the stage while he was on it. It's a queer business. Sometimes, I wish I hadn't gone into it. I'm sorry I didn't become an authoress. Miss

Finley says I'd make a splendid newspaper woman. By the way, wasn't she mean to me in that article of hers—about the performance? I don't see how she had the nerve to face me after it. And she gave you such a splendid notice, too. I did intend to stay at the hotel with her a few days longer; but now I won't. I think she's a kind of jealous thing, anyway. She's jealous of the attention I've been receiving at the hotel. There's been a coldness between us ever since yesterday morning, and you know that isn't very pleasant."

Evelyn did not tell Miss Gordon of her offer from Saunderson until her guest was about to leave. When she did mention it, an expression of mingled surprise, displeasure, and cunning appeared in the face of the actress. But that vanished instantly, and gave place to a smile.

"So you've got it at last! Well, I congratulate you. I'm awfully glad. It will be so nice for us to be in the same company."

Evelyn thought of Miss Gordon's treatment of her during the out-of-door performance, and wondered.

"And Belle Livingstone's left!" Miss Gordon went on. "Why, she was sure of it. She stayed in New York on purpose to get it. Do you suppose the notices of your Rosalind got it for you? They probably did. Perhaps Saunderson saw Miss Finley's article. Really these newspaper women have a great deal of power. Too much, I think."

It was Oswald Webb who informed Evelyn of the finding of Seymour's body. He had received the news from Mr. Marble. He called shortly after Helen Gordon had left, and he brought with him



a large bunch of roses which he said Mrs. Webb had sent. He spoke of Seymour as if he had been nothing more than her friend, and he showed great tact and delicacy; he had evidently liked the actor and admired his talent; if he saw the weaker side of Sevmour's nature, there was nothing in what he said that could be twisted into a betrayal of the perception. Mrs. Webb, as he had expected, was ill after the excitement and exposure of the afternoon; all night long she had been in a high fever, but she was quiet to-day. He did not know what had happened during her call at Appleby Terrace, something unpleasant he feared; Mrs. Webb had given him an incoherent account of it. He hoped Miss Johnson would overlook anything his wife had said or done: in times of excitement she seemed to lose control of herself, indeed, not to be quite herself. When she realised, she would be sorry. Here his embarrassment was so great that he stammered, hesitated, and finally stopped speaking.

"Oh, before I go," he said, "let me congratulate you on your engagement — your New York en-

gagement," he added.

"So you've heard of it already?"

"Yes, I heard of it as I came in from Mrs. Bowen. I met her on the porch."

XXVI.

For several days Saunderson did not send the part of Mathilde to Evelyn, and by the time it arrived, Madge had returned home. Madge would have liked to stay longer; but she could not resist the daily appeals of Jimmy Wise to come back. Besides, Evelyn was taking Harold Seymour's death with wonderful fortitude.

Evelyn sometimes wondered why she did not suffer more. Harold Seymour's death caused her not nearly so much grief and misery as the breaking of her engagement. This summer he had seemed so different, except for those few moments in the water, when he had assumed in her eves all his heroic qualities. It was strange that she should seek now to judge him; yet, whenever she thought of him, she kept weighing his qualities, trying to explain to herself why he had changed. She would not acknowledge to herself that the change was in herself alone: she had read in novels about lovers who had been separated for years and then had met again, and tried and failed to be to each other what they had been. But in the few months of her separation from Harold Seymour, they could not have changed so completely; perhaps her respect for him was gone; that might explain many qualities she had never noticed before.

One morning while Evelyn was looking over her new part, Mrs. Bowen entered the parlour; she was greatly interested in hearing about Leonard Thayer's play. She had already read the novel.

"Read the part out loud to us, won't you?" she

asked, eagerly.

"A great many of the speeches are taken bodily from the story," said Evelyn.

"Well, in the story they're perfectly beautiful."

"Yes, it's much more sympathetic than Mrs. Gwynne, Miss Gordon's part; but it isn't so dramatic."

"Miss Gordon will do Mrs. Gwynne beautifully," said Mrs. Bowen. "It might have been written for her."

"Yes, she expects to make a hit."

Just then Mrs. Appleby strolled into the room. "Ain't it wonderful to hear an actress talk about the parts she plays?" she said to Mrs. Bowen. "Seems like another world to me."

"I almost feel like an actress myself," exclaimed Mrs. Bowen, gaily.

Evelyn laughed. "You're not an actress, dear. You're an authoress."

"No, I'm not," said Mrs. Bowen, shaking her head, sadly. "I've given that up."

"What! Given up your story?"

"H'm, h'm! I got discouraged. I lost faith."

"But what will Mr. Webb say? And after all these confidences, too."

"I sha'n't speak of it to him. I'll just let it drop."

Evelyn was not surprised; she had often observed similar drooping literary ambitions among



young actors and actresses ambitious to write plays. "Then you can help me with my part," she said. "You can give me the cues — after I learn it."

The Stearns boys and Ned, as well as Mrs. Bowen, soon came to be almost as familiar with the lines as Evelyn was herself. Mrs. Bowen's room was the scene of many a rehearsal, in which Evelyn was commended and lectured and mimicked.

During this time Evelyn neither saw nor received word from Oswald Webb; but Mrs. Appleby announced, with a significant inflection, that Mrs. Webb had been confined to her room for several days; she had heard through Mrs. Stevenson's servants. As a rule, Mrs. Appleby was skeptical about Mrs. Webb's illness; she had a theory that a lot of these rich people, with nothing else to do, just made themselves sick by thinking of nothing but themselves. Since Mrs. Webb's sudden advent at Appleby Terrace, however, she had formed the habit, whenever the invalid's name was mentioned, of touching her head and nodding suggestively.

One afternoon late in the week, Mr. Webb called at the cottage. He apologised for not having come or sent word before. "We have been a little alarmed about Mrs. Webb," he said. "Indeed, we are still. It's the effect of her exposure and excitement that afternoon." After what seemed to Evelyn a long silence, he added, "I suppose we ought to be very patient with these nervous sufferers."

"Yes, they inflict such — such suffering on themselves."

"Exactly. My wife has tortured herself for

years. She has very strange fancies sometimes,—such inconsistent ones, too. How inconsistent people are! I've often thought it would really be quite impossible to put a human being just as he is into a novel. People would think the character was unnatural and the critics would say it hadn't been held together."

"That is true," Evelyn assented.

"Now, Mrs. Webb is such a bundle of inconsistencies."

"It's her illness, don't you think so?" Evelyn asked.

"Yes, I presume it is. I suppose all women aren't so."

"I am sure they are not."

"She suffers very much from her inconsistencies," he went on, as if it was a relief to him to talk about his wife. "She's always regretting things that she's done. She's a little quick-tempered, you know; her illness has made her so. And sometimes she says things that she doesn't mean. She's lost a great many friends that way."

"I know. She told me."

"Ah, did she tell you? She has been talking about it a great deal lately, wishing that some of her old friends could come back. Several of them are dead now." He paused for a moment, then he went on, "Do you know she has an idea that she has offended you?"

Evelyn flushed and shook her head; she could not trust herself to speak.

"I told her so. I felt sure of it. That is why I spoke of it. I knew you wouldn't take offence at a few hasty words spoken in excitement."



- "I should like very much to go to see her," said Evelyn. "Do you think she would care to see me?"
- "I am sure she would. I I intended to ask you but —"
 - "When may I come to-morrow?"
- "Yes, to-morrow would do very well, to-morrow afternoon. And have you received your part?" he asked, as if anxious to change the subject. "I have told her all about it. She is very much interested."

XXVII.

Whenever Evelyn went to the Webbs, she felt like apologising to Mrs. Bowen. So far as she knew, her friend had not discovered the antipathy Mrs. Webb felt for her, but she surely must suspect that there was some reason why she had never been urged to repeat her call. To-day she explained that Mrs. Webb was very ill and had sent for her; she would probably stay only a few moments; perhaps the invalid would be unable to see her at all.

While picking her way along the narrow path that was used as a short cut to the top of the hill, Evelyn saw before her a sprightly figure making the descent. There was no mistaking the gait, the red parasol and shoes, the blue sailor suit. Evelyn looked around for a chance to escape; there was none. Besides, Miss Finley's keen eyes had probably discovered her.

"How nice," said the journalist, giving Evelyn a gloved finger. "How do you do? Don't you just love this weather? No? I do. It couldn't be too hot for me. Going up to the Webbs? It's no use. You can't see her. She's awfully sick. I just asked for her at the door."

Evelyn said that she should go to the door, too, and at least leave a card.

"Leave a card!" Miss Finley repeated, scornfully. "Leave a card on a dying woman!"



"Is she dying?" Evelyn asked, shocked.

"Of course she is. I've heard all about it. The nurse used to be at Charity Hospital. I used to know her there. She's a protégée of Doctor Griffiths, and Doctor Griffiths is a great friend of mine. So she'd tell me anything. Mrs. Webb's out of her head half the time, Mrs. Bell says, and she abuses her husband so. Poor man, I pity him. He's just sacrificed himself to her. I guess if I published all I knew about the Webbs, it would create a sensation. Such a life as she's led him! The servants have told Mrs. Bell. I think it ought to be written up. Such women should be exposed."

"Perhaps she isn't responsible," said Evelyn.

"Well, it's hard to tell who's responsible and who isn't these days. It makes me sick, — these newfangled notions about people not being responsible. I guess she's responsible enough, though I do think she's been kind of cracked for years. I wish you could have seen how she acted once when I went there. You know she's wildly jealous of him. I'd been to dine there, and then I called, of course. Well, I sent up my card. She was up-stairs, and if you could have heard what she said about me. I could overhear every word."

"Has it been mentioned yet in the papers that she's so ill?" said Evelyn, to change the subject.

"No; I wrote a little article about it yesterday, but my managing editor wouldn't publish it. But he'll publish the one I'm going to write to-day. I'll make him think some other paper is going to get ahead of him on it. There's an awful bright fellow from the *Item* down here. His name is Chapman. He's always prowling around, and he

has a wonderful nose for news. I have to look sharp to keep ahead of him. I'm convinced that he'll find out that Mrs. Webb is dying before twenty-four hours are over."

"Dear me, dear me!" said Evelyn.

"But he won't get ahead of me on the obituary notice. I've got that arranged. It's all written, nearly a column. You know she was a Bliss; heaps of money. I've gathered together a lot of facts that no one else can possibly get. Mrs. Bell has promised to send me word just as soon as she dies."

"I hope you won't have to publish the notice,"

said Evelyn. "Mrs. Webb may get well."

Miss Finley shook her head. "Mrs. Bell is sure she's gone this time. That rushing out after her husband in the storm the other day settled her. Wasn't it disgraceful? Mrs. Bell happened to be out of the room, and, when she got back, Mrs. Webb had disappeared. They didn't know what had become of her, and they were nearly frightened to death. The servants hunted everywhere. They had just started to give the alarm when she came home. Well, I must hurry on. This is my busy time of the week, getting ready for the Sunday paper. By the way, I'm so glad you got that splendid New York engagement. I'll make a note of it."

Evelyn was prepared to find the door of the Webbs closed to callers. But when the servant appeared, she was told that Mrs. Webb might be able to see her.

A moment later, Oswald Webb descended the stairs.

"You are very good to come in spite of the heat," he said. "We hardly expected you. But Mrs.



Webb would have been disappointed if you hadn't come. Yes, she seems to be a little better. But we can't tell. The doctor has warned us to watch her carefully. Won't you come up now?"

Evelyn followed him up the broad staircase. An ominous silence prevailed in the house. As they approached the first floor, the noiseless nurse glided from one room into another, bearing a small tray in her hand. When they entered Mrs. Webb's room, they found the invalid lying on the bed, her long, thin arms stretched on the coverlet. Her face seemed thinner and yellower and more wrinkled, but her eyes were bright.

"Ah, you've come at last," she said, feebly, and with a faint smile, extending her hand. "I was afraid you wouldn't. I was afraid you were offended with me."

She clung to the hand that Evelyn offered her, and asked her to sit on the bed. "I was half-crazy that day," she went on, abruptly. "I didn't realise what I was saying. You'll forgive me, won't you?"

Evelyn assured her that there was nothing to forgive; even if there had been, she would have forgiven freely and fully.

The invalid drew a long breath. "I couldn't bear to think that I had you against me. You know I've liked you from the first, because — because you're genuine. And I wanted to have a little talk with you — before — " She looked quickly around. "Oswald, please go away; I want to talk with Miss Johnson alone."

"All right, dear," he replied, quietly. Then, as he went out of the room, he turned and said, more,



Evelyn thought, for her own sake than for his wife's, "I'll be near at hand if you need me."

"Come over closer," the invalid said, still clinging to Evelyn's hand. Her own hand was hot and moist. "I suppose you think I'm a strange woman. Well, I am strange. I was born so. I come of queer stock; there's something queer in my family. My life has been an expiation. It has been a long, long torture. I've seen happiness all around me, so near that it seemed all I had to do was to stretch out my hand and take it. But it was just beyond my reach, just beyond my reach."

As she spoke, she tried to raise her head, and moisture broke out on her forehead; she sank back on the pillow. "Get me that handkerchief over there on the bureau. Thanks. You see how peremptory I am," she added, with a smile. "I'm used to being obeyed. Perhaps it would be better for me if I weren't."

Evelyn took her place by the bedside again, and Mrs. Webb passed the handkerchief over her face, and waited a moment before going on. She clasped her hands together on the counterpane with the handkerchief between them.

"This weather nearly kills me," she gasped. "And yet when it is hottest, I'm often cold. But it won't last long."

"Yes, the summer will soon be over," said Evelyn.

"Oh, I don't mean that. I mean that I sha'n't last long. I'm going to die; I'm going to die soon."

Evelyn tried to reassure her with the meaningless



comfort that is offered to invalids. Mrs. Webb shook her head.

"You needn't talk to me like that. I know better. I've been ill for years, but I've never felt like this before. For the past few days I've known that I was going. At first it frightened me; it seemed so terrible to go alone. That's the worst of death,—the loneliness of it. But now I'm resigned even to that." She paused a moment, as if to gain breath; then she went on more quietly: "It's very interesting to any one like me to watch the change. I've thought too much about myself; but I can't help it now. Since three days ago I've felt as if I'd begun to cross the borderland. Oh, it isn't sudden; death gives warning enough."

"I wouldn't talk like that, Mrs. Webb," Evelyn said. "It only depresses you. I'm sure you'll soon be better."

The invalid shook her head. "I'm past that kind of consolation. I see things in a way you can't understand. I've been living over my life, and I've been seeing it in its true light. I've been a verv selfish woman. You needn't say I haven't. I've thought of nothing but myself. That's what's spoiled everything. Do you know that most of the world's blessings are terrible mockeries? They've been so to me. They've made me brood and brood, instead of thinking about other people. Perhaps what I've suffered will be taken as expiation. You see I still believe in expiation. Isn't that strange? It seems to be rooted in my being. I suppose it is in my New England blood; it's an inheritance from my crazy Puritan ancestors. Oswald hasn't got it, not a touch of it. Yet he's

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had to share my expiation, and he's been so brave and so uncomplaining about it. Perhaps it's because he robbed me of my faith in God with his doubts and his arguments and his theories. I've thought of that; I've thought of everything. Oh, if I could only get it back," she wailed, "if I could only get it back. Ah, you don't understand. I can see it in your face. Sometimes when I think of myself, I get into despair. But I'm going to make an atonement; perhaps that will save me. You see I can't get away from the old haunting terror that was bred in me. I'm afraid. I'm afraid."

"What are you afraid of, Mrs. Webb?"

Mrs. Webb seemed not to have heard her. "My life has been a waste, a dragging down of others. Think what I've been to my husband, a torment, a trial! He has sacrificed himself for me. I've spoiled his career. Oh, don't, don't say I haven't. I know better. I realise it now plainly. And yet I thought I was giving him everything. It was just my selfishness. That's what I must atone for."

"I am sure you blame yourself too much," Evelyn said. She wondered why she was being made the recipient of these confidences, and she wished that Mr. Webb would come back and end them.

"You'll be surprised when you hear what I'm going to say to you," the invalid went on, ignoring Evelyn's remark. "I'm surprised myself that I can say it. A little while ago I couldn't; but, as I said, everything has changed with me lately. I can do things now that I couldn't have done before." She began to breathe hard again, and she waited, as if to gather strength. "Do you know," she



resumed at last, "that my husband — that he's in love with you?"

Evelyn felt the blood surge to her face; then, for a moment, she thought her heart stopped beating. "I am sure you are mistaken," she said. "This is a mere fancy." She covered her face with her hands; she was almost overwhelmed with shame.

Mrs. Webb looked at her quietly for a moment. Then she said: "I felt sure you didn't know. I had confidence in you — in spite of my doubts at first."

"You mustn't say such things," Evelyn exclaimed, passionately. "You have no right." Then, when she looked at the emaciated figure before her, she blamed herself. Of course, Mrs. Webb was not responsible.

"Don't misunderstand me," the invalid went on. "He doesn't realise it himself. But I have seen it. It's quite unconscious on his part. He won't know till I'm gone, perhaps for a long time after. These things are very strange. You think this is very strange, too, don't you, my speaking? You think it's strange that I seem to care so little about it. But I do care. I care a great deal for him. And I know it's all for the best."

"I wish you wouldn't say such things," said Evelyn. "Don't you see that it's wrong — to me?"

"No, it isn't wrong. I want to prevent any mistake. I want you to know. You could make Oswald happy. I'm sure of that. You would care for the things he cares for: I've never done that really. You could encourage him; perhaps you

could help him to make up for all these years he has wasted on me. You know how much talent he has, and how little he's done with it. It's all my fault. I should like to make it up to him, if I could. Don't you see what a sacrifice I am making to tell you this?"

"It's a mistake," said Evelyn, trying to control herself. "You will realise it by and by, when you get better."

"When I get better," the invalid repeated. "Then I sha'n't care. Now that I've spoken, I'm satisfied; I feel that I've done at least one unselfish thing in my life. Now I feel tired. Just ring that bell, won't you?"

The nurse glided in swiftly and silently, and Oswald Webb followed her. Evelyn hardly dared to look him in the face; she was afraid that the invalid would speak out before him what she had just said to her. At the thought of this possibility, she felt faint. But Mrs. Webb merely announced that she had had a good talk with Miss Johnson, and was much better for it. Evelyn said that she feared she had tired her out, and started to go.

"You'll never see me again, my dear," said Mrs. Webb, taking her hand. "Now kiss me good-bye. There, good-bye, good-bye." Then she turned her head toward her husband.

"Miss Johnson has great faith, Oswald," she said.

"I wish we all had," he replied, quietly.

Something in Webb's manner evidently displeased the invalid.

"Oswald is a materialist," she cried, turning

her head on the pillow to fix her eyes upon him. "He thinks there's nothing in the world but matter, matter. It's a horrible doctrine."

He did not attempt to argue with her. He merely said: "Hush, dear, hush!"

"Now don't you talk to me like that," she cried, a flush spreading over her yellow face. "I won't have it. Do you think a husband has any right to talk to his wife like that, Miss Johnson?"

Evelyn stood near the bedside. She felt unable to move or to speak.

"Why don't you answer me?" Mrs. Webb cried, with a sudden access of strength, after waiting a moment for a reply. "Why don't you answer me? Are you in league with him, too?"

"Miss Johnson must go now, dear," said Webb, quietly, seeing the look of terror in Evelyn's face.

The nurse entered the room with a glass in her hand.

"This will ease her," she whispered, as she dipped the spoon into the glass.

"Perhaps I'd better go now," said Evelyn.

They did not speak until they reached the door.

"I hope it hasn't upset you," he said, as he opened the door for her.

XXVIII.

Three days later Mrs. Webb died. The news was conveyed to Appleby Terrace by the *Telegraph*; it appeared in no other paper that morning. Evelyn thought, with a shudder, that Miss Finley had made her "beat." The column article, in which the journalist's touch was plainly visible, announced that the death had occurred about midnight. Evelyn wondered how Miss Finley had received word of it. Could the nurse have sent a messenger to The Wetmore at that hour? Perhaps Miss Finley had been prowling about the house, fearful of a defeat by her rival of the *Item*.

Evelyn had confided to no one the story of her last talk with Mrs. Webb. At first she had felt that she must tell it, that she must ask some one for sympathy; but she could not tell Mrs. Bowen, for this indefatigable correspondent would be sure to rehearse the story to her husband. Roscoe was the only one in whom she could confide; he would be sympathetic enough; but, after all, he was only a boy, and could hardly be expected to understand such things. She wondered uneasily if Mrs. Webb had given her husband an account of their interview. Of course, the idea of his being in love with her was merely the fancy of an overwrought brain; but it was a fancy that, under the present circum-

stances, might create painful embarrassment between them.

At the boarding-house Mrs. Appleby led in the discussion of Mrs. Webb's death. She openly declared she wasn't a bit sorry. It must be a great relief to poor Mr. Webb. She had heard things from the Webbs' servants; she guessed, if the truth were known, Mrs. Webb would be considered a pretty disagreeable sort of a woman. Pooh! a great invalid she was! She had probably died of pneumonia, brought on by her getting soaked through the day of the storm. Complication of diseases! Mrs. Appleby didn't believe it for a moment.

From the accumulation of disturbances in her life, Evelyn began to lose sleep. Though she was usually a quick study, she had difficulty in committing to memory the lines of her new part. She feared that she was going to be ill. It was this fear that roused her; of course, if she fell ill, she would have to give up her part, the best chance she had ever had. In this way, she would lose whatever prestige she had gained by her Rosalind. She determined to battle against her depression, and she threw herself energetically into her old habits of exercise, which she had begun to neglect. Still, sleep would not come till half the night was over, and she awoke haggard and fatigued.

One night she determined to sit up late, reading, in order to tire herself out. She heard twelve o'clock striking in the distance. She put her hand to her head, and found that it was hot; her glass showed her that her cheeks were flushed. The little room, though the window had been open, was hot,

almost stifling from the flaring gas. It would be impossible to sleep in such an atmosphere. So she decided to put out the light, to open her door in order to create a draught, and to go and sit on the porch. She threw on a wrap, and stole quietly

down the stairs. She had some difficulty in opening the front door, which Mrs. Appleby, with a woman's timorous forethought, always bolted and barred with superfluous appliances.

The air was heavy with moisture from the sea; the sky was of a deep blackness, relieved only by occasional stars. She sat on one of the red benches on the porch, and drew her wrap close around her; the dampness made her shiver. For half an hour she looked out on the ocean and watched the intermittent gleam of Minot's Light. There was scarcely a sound. She lived over again the events of the past few weeks, and contrasted them with the quiet and happy summer of the year before. She wondered if she ever should be happy again; some people, she believed, were destined for unhappiness all their lives. A long, struggling existence stretched out before her, a vista of dubious engagements, of weary travel, of second-class hotels, of bad press-notices, of the endless worry about the next season.

Suddenly she thought she heard some one coming up the road. She wondered who could be out walking so late at night. She listened, and distinctly heard steps approaching. It was so dark that she could not have seen any one that passed the cottage; so she was not afraid of being perceived herself. The steps drew nearer; they were slow and regular, and suggested the heavy tramp of a long-gaited



man. Presently, she could faintly distinguish the outlines of a figure. When it reached Appleby Terrace, it stopped, and she was startled to see it turn and walk up to the piazza. Her heart beat fast, and she rose quickly to make her escape into the house. As she hurried to the door, the figure stood suddenly still, and she heard an exclamation of surprise. Then a voice that she thought she recognised said:

"I beg pardon. I didn't know any one was here."

She stood on the threshold and clung to the knob of the door. "Is that you, Mr. Webb?" she said.

"Yes," the voice replied. "This is Miss Johnson, isn't it? I'm very sorry. I'm afraid I've frightened you."

"Oh, no, only a little. I couldn't imagine who it was." She continued standing at the door, uncertain what to do.

"I intended to rest here for a moment before making the pull up the hill. I've been taking a long walk."

"Then do sit down," said Evelyn.

"It's rather late for a call. Will you sit down, too?"

"Certainly," she replied, with a feeling of embarrassment at meeting him under such circumstances, for the first time since his wife's death.

"I am very sorry for your trouble," she said, as she took her seat on the bench again. She could not think of any but the foolish conventional words in which to express her sympathy.

"Thank you. I knew you would be sorry. It was quite unexpected — at the end. No matter

how long you may be prepared for it, death always comes as a surprise." He leaned forward and covered his face with his hands. "I can't sleep these nights," he said, quietly. "That is why I take my long walks. I've just been over to Hull. It's a pretty good stretch — six miles each way, at least." For a moment they sat without speaking. "Sleep-lessness takes all the moral and physical support away from me. But one can do a great deal of thinking in the silence of the night."

"Too much," said Evelyn, with a faint smile.

"Yes, that is true. There are times when it's best not to think at all."

"Those are just the times when you can't help thinking most."

"If we could only forget painful things, and remember those that are pleasant," said Webb. "It's what has been done and what has been lost that bothers us." Then, after a pause, he went on: "I suppose every one wants to live over his life again and undo mistakes. If we could have our wish, we might not make the same mistakes; but we'd make others just as bad."

"Some of us don't want to live our lives over again," Evelyn said, quietly. "Once is enough."

His face brightened. "It would be horrible to have regrets for more than one life, wouldn't it? But lately, I've been thinking that, if I only had youth back again, I should do with it far more than I have done. 'Give me youth, and I will conquer the world.' Isn't that the most melancholy saying ever invented? It's a terrible thing for a man to feel that he had made a failure of his chances."

"But you surely can't feel that way."



"That is just how I do feel. I am forty-three years old, and what have I done with my life? Before I was twenty-seven, I wrote two books. They had some success, and people predicted great things for me. But I've never accomplished the great things. I've simply rested on the poor little laurels that I won in the enthusiasm of youth. The best years of my life, the mature years, have been wasted. And now I'm just going into the sere and yellow leaf."

"Is forty-three the sere and yellow leaf? I didn't

know it began so early."

"It has begun for me, I'm afraid," he laughed. "I feel old and rusty."

"But so many writers have done their best things after forty."

"Yes, I've thought of that. But they had been hard at work for years; they'd been preparing themselves. I've been going to seed."

"I'm sure it isn't too late — to — to go on again." As soon as she spoke, she felt ashamed; her remark seemed like presumption. But Oswald Webb took it very seriously.

"Don't you think so?" he said. "I have been wondering. I've thought of it — of trying all over again. Ever since I got married, I've been a dilettante. I lost my spur then. I had a rich wife. I didn't need to work. There's no incentive like poverty."

"True," said Evelyn, fervently.

"I might go on leading the life of a *dilettante* all my days, if I chose. It's pleasant — in some ways. But, after all, there's nothing like being in the struggle of life. Even if you fail, there's something

exhilarating in it. I missed it at first. I didn't know what the matter was. Besides, I was enjoying the novelty of having plenty of money, and buying all the books I needed. I read and read, and by and by I lost the impulse to write anything extended. I let things drop. I merely clung to my reviewing as a kind of excuse."

"But you must be so much better equipped for writing now than you were before," said Evelyn. "You must know life so much better."

"Oh, yes, I ought to have profited by my experience. Perhaps I have. But it's hard to get the impulse again. Besides, I've lost the habit of studying life. I've studied only books." Then he seemed suddenly to feel that he had talked too much about himself. He rose quickly and said: "You must forgive me for boring you with these things."

"They don't bore me," Evelyn replied. "They interest me very much. Only — I hope — I hope you will - that you will begin again."

"Perhaps if you encourage me, I will," he said, with a smile. "I need incentive."

She felt her face growing hot in the dark, and she was glad he could not see it. Her mind went back to her last talk with Mrs. Webb.

"I suppose every one needs incentive."

"Some of us more than others. We have to be helped out of a groove. I feel as if I were in a deep rut. I'm not contented there, and yet it's hard work to get out."

He turned and started to leave the porch. "You must forgive me for making such an unconventional call," he whispered, looking back from the darkness.

She made no reply, for she was just closing the



heavy door. When she reached her room, she sat on the bed for several moments without lighting the gas. She thought of Mrs. Webb, as she had appeared on the day of their last talk, haggard and worn and bright-eyed. Then she lit the gas. She opened a little cabinet in the corner of the room and drew out a small box, and from it she took a cabinet photograph of Harold Seymour. It was one that she had seen in a shop window in Cleveland, a few weeks after their engagement was broken, and had bought. For a long time she looked at it. She remembered wonderingly the emotion the sight of it had once given her. Then she put it back in the box, placed the box in the cabinet, and went to bed.

XXIX.

During the last two weeks of her summer at Cohasset, Evelyn was able to take a complete rest. She mastered her part, and she felt no worry for the immediate future. As a rule, at the beginning of a season, especially since she had been on the road, she felt depressed; she had a fear that she might be unequal to the task before her. But now she looked forward to her work in New York; her success with Rosalind had given her confidence, and she had before her an opportunity to win a position that might keep her in comfort for several years. Her only regret in going back to New York was in leaving Appleby Terrace, which had grown to seem like home.

The day before she left Cohasset, Oswald Webb came to say good-bye. He seemed to be in unusu-

ally good spirits, and he talked animatedly.

"I think of going on to New York before very long," he said, "on business. You can't imagine what a business man I've become lately. I'm deep in affairs. They've offered me an interest in a magazine, — Thè Universe."

"Do you think of giving up the Argus?" Eve-

lyn asked, in surprise.

"I thought of it. I'm tired of reviewing. It's desperately dry and unsatisfactory work. It isn't literature, and it isn't journalism."

- "I should think that magazine work would be much more interesting."
- "Yes, it's like being in the thick of the literary fight. I should enjoy that. I feel like an old warhorse that longs for the smell of powder again. Then I have some ideas of my own about magazine editing."
 - "When will you come on?"
- "I can't tell exactly. Possibly not at all. I don't know just what the condition of the property is. I must find that out before I think seriously of taking an interest. They are flattering enough to say they want me to take charge because they think I could push it ahead."
 - "But wouldn't it interfere with your writing?"
- "Oh, no; I should write just the same." Then he added, with a laugh: "I could publish my own work in it. That's part of the proposition they've made to me. You see, I'm not altogether forgotten in spite of my years of unproductiveness." As he rose to leave, he said: "I shall certainly see you in your new part, whether I take hold of the *Universe* or not. But the production of a first play by Thayer is a great event, you know, and it will be worth an article in the *Argus*. So I'll be there to write it. Be prepared for a very sharp criticism," he concluded, smiling.

Evelyn felt keenly the parting with her friends at Appleby Terrace. Compared with the life of New York, with its hordes of rushing, struggling, contending workers, Cohasset seemed in her eyes a kind of heaven. Mrs. Bowen was unable to restrain her grief. She had a clinging nature, and, in the absence of her husband, she had clung to



Evelyn. Mr. Bowen would not return to Boston for three weeks, and she dreaded the interval during which she should be without the companionship that she craved. She consoled herself, however, with the thought that, on Evelyn's departure, she would gain a new correspondent; they promised fervently to write to each other, and Mrs. Bowen declared that, if she possibly could, she would make her husband take her to New York to see Evelyn in her new part. The boys said, too, that they would go on to see her if they were able; but college would just be opening then, and they would have to be on hand. The company would come to Boston, wouldn't it? All the good New York plays did after awhile. Evelyn had heard that, if the piece was successful, it would run in New York all winter; but perhaps it would be played in Boston in the spring. As she left Appleby Terrace, the boarders gave her an ovation. Mrs. Appleby was in tears, and her husband, who, though it was only nine o'clock in the morning, had paid her the high compliment of getting up early to bid her good-bye, manifested a decorous regret. Mrs. Bowen and the boys went down in the barge with her; they were driven by the man who had taken her up from the wharf on the day of her arrival; when he helped her to enter, he smiled. Evelyn thought with a sigh of her stolen money; but, with the prospect of a lucrative engagement in mind, the loss seemed much easier to bear. Ned made an effort to be gay; but he was not seconded by the other boys, and, as they reached the landing, he lapsed into silence.

The parting at the wharf was the severest trial



of all to Evelyn. It meant to her the knell of the most eventful summer of her life. She took her seat on the upper deck of the boat, and saw the shores of Nantasket recede from her with a sickly sinking of the heart. But the day was bright, and land and water sparkled in the sunshine; the world was still beautiful, though her spirit might be heavy, and before she reached Boston she felt better.

She took the one o'clock train for New York. went straight from the station to the old place in Twenty-third Street, where she had written of her coming, and spent the evening in running over her part in order to be sure of her lines for the rehearsal in the morning. This was an unnecessary precaution, as most of the actors, during the first few rehearsals, would probably read their lines from the manuscript. The noise of the cable-cars kept her from sleeping soundly, and, when she woke late in the morning, and found herself in her new surroundings, she felt again the sense of desolation that had afflicted her on leaving Cohasset. her arrangement at the boarding-house, she was to take her breakfast in her room at her own convenience; after her work at night, she could not be expected to appear in the dining-room early in the morning with the other boarders. When she had rung the bell for her coffee and toast, it was past ten o'clock. She hurried in order to appear at the theatre promptly at eleven.

To reach the stage entrance, she had to walk down a dingy back street. At the door she met Harry Davidson, who was just about to enter. He stepped back to allow her to pass. She thought he was going to speak, but he merely smiled. She

walked down the dimly lighted corridor to the stage, hoping to meet some one she knew who should introduce her to the other members of the company. In the wings a group of men and women were sitting on wooden chairs; it was too dark to see who they were, but, amid the noise of the talk and laughter, she thought she heard Helen Gordon's smooth tones. Harry Davidson was walking close behind her, and, as she approached the group, some one recognised him and shouted a greeting.

"Why, how are you, old man?" said a stout, middle-aged actor, springing from his chair and offering the actor his hand. The others in the group stood up, and there was general hand-shaking and introducing. Evelyn stood apart and waited for the excitement over the favourite to subside. She could now see Miss Gordon distinctly; she was smiling at Davidson. Her face was more sunburned than it had been at Cohasset: she looked as if she had been yachting. She wore a tightfitting dress of blue cloth, and one of her coquettish little hats, perched on the top of her head and only half-covering her glossy hair. She was so absorbed in the conversation around her that for several moments she did not notice Evelyn. When, however, she did perceive her, she uttered an exclamation of delight.

"Why, when did you come in?" she cried, clasping Evelyn's hand. "I'm delighted to see you again. I've been watching out for you."

She turned from the group, and for the next few moments devoted herself to a discussion of Cohasset affairs.

"You know I left Cohasset rather suddenly,"



she said. "I really couldn't stand that Miss Finley any longer. I was so disgusted when I found she had got up the performance just for her own glory and profit. Do you know how much the Fresh Air Fund got out of it?"

Evelyn replied that she hadn't heard.

"Just fifteen dollars," said Miss Gordon, dramatically, looking at Evelyn to observe the effect of this information. "Miss Finley confessed to me in the greatest secrecy; but, of course, I know I can tell you. Isn't it a shame? She just threw money away in advertising the thing."

"I wonder where Madge Guernsey is," said Eve-

lyn. "Have you seen her yet?"

"No," Miss Gordon replied, coldly.

"She's always late for rehearsal. She wrote me that she would surely be on hand."

Several actors had come in; Miss Gordon led Evelyn from group to group and introduced her to her new associates. The company was unusually large. The actors and actresses, two-thirds of whom had just returned from the seashore and the mountains, were entertaining one another with stories of their experiences. They all seemed to be as light-hearted as children, and, after being introduced, they treated one another as if they had been intimately acquainted for years. The seared-looking old men were as lively as the effeminate and affected youths who were to play the small parts.

It was nearly half-past eleven, and Evelyn wondered why the rehearsal was not called. Saunderson was bustling from place to place, and Hickey, the stage-manager, seemed to be intensely nervous.



"This is a pretty ticklish piece to put on," she heard him say to Harry Davidson. "If it goes at all, it'll be a great go. But if it don't, there'll be an awful fizzle." Some one then asked him what they were waiting for, and he said the author was coming to give some preliminary directions. Evelyn was glad of the delay for Madge's sake: she should have to give Madge a lecture; her dilatoriness might prejudice the management against her. At quarter of twelve, she heard a rustling of skirts and heavy breathing coming from the direction of the stage-door. She rose from her seat

Madge was embracing her.

"Am I very late?" Madge gasped.
"We haven't begun yet," Evelyn replied.

in the wings and looked around. In a moment

"Thank goodness! I was afraid I'd queered myself the first day. But I couldn't get here any sooner. Oh, I've had a terrible time. It's Jimmy Wise. I'll tell you all about it by-'n'-by. He insisted on coming with me yesterday. He would He's been pestering me so. He's at follow me. the Grand Hotel."

"What has he been pestering you about?" Evelyn asked, smiling at the incoherence of Madge's remarks.

"Why, he wanted me to promise to marry him before I left. But I wouldn't — that's all. So he followed me. He came to call this morning and began again. It's been perfectly awful."

XXX.

YEARS afterward, in speaking of the rehearsals of his first play, Leonard Thayer used to say he wondered why the actors hadn't killed him, or why they hadn't at least thrown him out of the theatre. He was intensely nervous; nothing seemed to please him; he criticised severely the stage-settings, the business and the readings of the actors, sometimes even their pronunciation, involving himself in tiresome disputes, which prolonged the rehearsals till the stage-manager was on the verge of despair. He sat in the back of the theatre, or, rather, he stood most of the time, for he could not keep still, and from the darkness he yelled his directions in a sharp and irritating voice. With Miss Gordon he was least severe; her quick intelligence at once seized and developed his suggestions. He worked hard with Evelyn; her conception, he told her, was correct enough, but she did not carry it out consistently. One day she became so discouraged that she went into the wings and cried. desperately to please him, but it was not until the last rehearsal that he expressed satisfaction. Harry Davidson he nearly came to blows. Davidson was not used to being treated as if he were a novice. He had his own methods, he declared, and both managers and audiences were willing to ac-

cept them. If Mr. Thayer didn't like the way he played the part, why, he could get some one else, that was all. This quarrel took place on Sunday night, at the dress rehearsal, which Thaver had presumed to interrupt. Davidson thrust his hands in his pockets, walked to the footlights, and assumed his prize-fighter expression; he evidently wished to put the matter on personal grounds. Leonard Thayer never had a greater desire to be impersonal; he explained, with a change of manner, that he had not intended to offend Mr. Davidson: he knew that Mr. Davidson could play the part better than any one else, if he would only follow his suggestions; but, if he followed his own whims, the piece would be ruined. Couldn't Mr. Davidson understand that? But Mr. Davidson only grunted,

and went on playing in a more slovenly manner than before, to the dejection of the author. Evelyn's sympathies were wholly with Thayer. In her judgment, Harry Davidson vulgarised the part; but she knew that the public would accept anything

from Davidson.

A few days before the performance, Evelyn received a note from Oswald Webb, saying that he should be on hand for the first night. His negotiations with the *Universe* people were off — for the present, at least. The stock was so tied up that for a year he could make no satisfactory arrangement; so he would continue his work for the *Argus*, and probably do more work than before; the dramatic critic had gone to the *Item* on a higher salary, and Stebbins had asked him to help out. He had begun the new novel, and he had already finished three chapters, but he wasn't satisfied; he

would go on and see what he could make out of it; it was doubtful if he should offer it to a publisher; it would be unwise for him to bring out a novel inferior to his earlier work. However, he was enjoying the glow of authorship, and perhaps there was something in literature for him yet.

Evelyn did not hear from him again before the first night. She went to the theatre early; but Madge Guernsey was already there. At Evelyn's request, they had been assigned to the same dressing-room. Madge, who had suffered from Thayer's criticism, was very nervous. The author, for whom she had conceived one of her most violent antipathies, had obliged her to moderate her exuberance, and she was afraid that the restraint would spoil her work. She was determined, however, to look as pretty as she could, and she devoted considerable time and care to dressing and making-up.

As Mathilde, Evelyn had to make a point of simplicity in dress as well as in manner. She was surprised to find that she was less nervous than her companion; as a rule, on first nights, she suffered from the strain. But she knew herself to be in sympathy with her part, and this feeling gave her confidence. She had the task, disagreeable to actors, of opening the piece; she had to be on the stage before the curtain went up. When she went out to take her place, she found Leonard Thayer standing at the edge of the curtain, looking out.

The stage was empty, and only the electrician stood in the wings. From the other side of the curtain came the sound of the flapping of the seats, the quick steps of the ushers, and the rustle of the people going down to their places.



When Thayer heard her footsteps, he turned quickly. "Oh, good evening, Miss Johnson," he said, with a smile. He had very bright eyes and a sensitive mouth with thin lips, half-covered by a brown moustache. "How well you look. You are just right."

"I've tried to follow your description in the

novel," she replied.

"You've read it, then? I wonder how many of the actors have taken the trouble to do that. Not many, I'm afraid."

"I had read it before I got the part."

"That's even a greater compliment," he said, laughing. "I hope you liked it."

"Yes, very much. I like all your stories. I've

read them all."

"Well, this is flattery. Which do you like best?"

"Oh, 'Myrna,' of course."

He burst into subdued laughter. "That always amuses me," he said. "Nearly every one tells me that, except other writers; they like the 'Myrna' least of all. You know, it was my first story."

"Yes, I knew it was."

"I feel now as if it had been written by some one else." He burst into his smothered laughter again. "Why," he went on, "whenever I see it about — in people's houses, I feel like blushing."

"You ought to be proud of it," Evelyn replied, with a smile. "But you have changed very much since then. "I've often wondered why," she added. "I know there must have been a reason."

"How clever you are!" he said, quizzically. Then he went on more seriously. "Perhaps I'll tell you about it sometime. You know we can't always



keep our illusions. Haven't you found that out in your stage life?"

"I don't know that I ever had any," Evelyn re-

plied, smiling.

- "Oh," he said, looking at her with a half-amused air, "you're full of them still. I can tell that from your acting. Now Miss Gordon hasn't one illusion."
- "Is that why she's such a good actress, do you think?"
- "Possibly. But I'm not reflecting on your work when I say that. She acts wholly from the head; you act from the heart. It's a treat to the emotions to see you. There's as much difference between your acting and hers as there is between 'Myrna' and my other stories."
 - "I am 'Myrna,' I suppose."

"Exactly."

- "And you're ashamed of 'Myrna.'"
- "Oh, no, not that way," he said, laughing.

"You really owe me an explanation."

- "Now you oblige me to confess something," he said. "I am really very proud of 'Myrna'; only she's too good for me; she makes me feel like a hypocrite. Do you know," he went on, turning again to the edge of the curtain, and adroitly changing the subject, "we're going to have an uncommonly fine audience? Wouldn't you like to look out?" he added, pulling back the curtain a little.
- "I know a better place than that," she replied, moving over toward the woodwork a few feet away from him. "Some one has bored a hole here."
- "I suppose I ought to be very much excited," he said, in a low voice, as they both looked out,

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"but I don't feel half so nervous as I've been feeling for a whole week. Perhaps I've worn out my capacity for worrying."

"Aren't you going to sit in a box?" Evelyn

asked.

"Yes; there's my box, - the lower right-hand one. The old lady with white hair is my mother. She cut her Europe short this summer just to see my triumph. I hope she won't be disappointed. The man with her is Willard Mayo," Thayer went on, referring to a stout, middle-aged man, with a large, round face, bright black eyes, and a heavy, drooping black moustache. "You know his stories, perhaps. He's been very popular; but he's getting a little lazy; he hasn't been doing much lately. He wrote a play once, too. It ran a hundred nights at the Gotham Theatre. Then it died, and he's been in mourning ever since. He hates the stage now. He advised me a couple of years ago never to have anything to do with it. He says it's 'a pit of vulgarity.' See that fellow who has just come into the box? He's shaking hands with my mother now. That's George Wilbur; you've heard of him, haven't you? He was in my class at Harvard. He looked like a young Greek in those days, with his light curly hair. But his moustache spoils his looks, and society has spoiled everything else. He spends his time in getting up dances and such things. He's a great social authority. He knows everybody that's considered worth knowing in New York, and all about them. When people are giving receptions and balls, they send him their lists, and he strikes off all the names that he thinks ought not to be there. The critics all seem to be here,"

the dramatist went on, still peering from behind the curtain. "There's old Woolson of the Record. See, that little man, with the iron gray hair and beard, in the third row of the orchestra. He'll be sure to give me an awful raking. He'll say the play is morbid, and then he'll write a long essay on the degrading influence of the contemporary drama. He's probably taken the cue from my novel, and he's written it already. He believes that criticism should either eulogise or condemn, and he prefers to condemn; it's easier, and it gives a wider scope for his magnificent vocabulary. And see right behind him — that reddish-looking man, the one with the half-bald head and red moustache. That's Godfrey, of the Wasp. He's a clever fellow, but they say he has his price. I've heard it from several people who ought to know. It's curious that any paper should publish his articles. But they have a kind of cheap cleverness about them. That chap with him, the long-haired old man, that's Sydney Carleton, editor of Comics. He's a queer example of the editor who can't write. He's lived among literary men all his life — he's been intimate with some of the most famous men of his day and he's got a wonderful stock of reminiscences: but he'll carry them to the grave with him."

"What a curious way he has of throwing back his hair with his hand," said Evelyn.

Thayer laughed. "He likes to display his diamond ring. It was given him by a celebrated actress years ago, and has a history, I believe. He hasn't an idea of his own. All he knows is borrowed from books. He's become so saturated with reading that he's forgotten all about life. There are plenty of *

people just like him. The woman behind him is an interesting character,—the one with the high gray hair and the red cheeks. You see, she has more than the rosy complexion of youth. She hasn't a particle of literary ability; yet, by sheer force of will, she's made writing pay. She contributes articles about women to the papers and magazines. She's a clever talker, though, and she's built up a kind of salon. She has a lot of the writers in New York at her house. She told me that last winter she made seven hundred dollars out of the witty things people said at her dinnertable. I can't help admiring her industry."

"Who is the short-haired woman in the — let me see, one, two, three — in the seventh row of the orchestra, on the left?"

"Oh, that's Mrs. Jimmy Bateman. She's a society woman, but you'd never think so from her looks. She goes in for literature more or less, though she can't write herself. So many people who can't write go in for literature. I meet people all the time who refer to themselves as if they were distinguished authors, and when I ask about them I find they haven't written a thing. It's quite bewildering."

"I suppose there are parasites in every profession," said Evelyn, with a smile. "There certainly are in the theatrical profession. A great many people affect the society of actors who have no connection with the stage at all."

"Can you see way over on the right, in one of the middle rows of the orchestra, a short, stout man, pulling at his cuffs?"

For a moment Evelyn did not answer; then she



said, "Yes, I think I know the one you mean; a puffed-out face and roving eyes."

"Yes. Well, he's a character. He ought to be put into a novel. His name is F. Percival Stagg; he's the owner and editor of the *Literary Emporium*, the new weekly. He started it himself about

a year ago."

"He doesn't look like a literary man."

"He isn't. That is the most curious part of it. He used to be a miner, I think. He comes originally from Kentucky somewhere. He discovered a mine out in Nevada, and it made his fortune. They say he's worth several millions. Then he came to New York to become literary."

"How curious."

"Yes, isn't it? He started the Literary Emporium, and he's been pouring his money into it ever since. He thinks he's getting it back in glory. It must be a pretty melancholy glory. He goes among the literary people, but he's as out of place among them as I should be among a lot of miners. He feels it, too; but he doesn't know what the matter is. He'd make a capital psychological study. See how restless he is, and what a disagreeable expression there is on his face, as if he hated everybody in the house. I've noticed that expression when I've met him at parties. He looks as if he wanted to punch everybody's head."

Evelyn continued to watch the audience, or, rather, that part of it which she could see, for a third of the house was cut off from her view. She was looking for Oswald Webb, wondering if he were coming, if he had yet come. The time for the performance to begin had already passed, and

the orchestra had not begun to play; the audience continued to rustle in, and the noise of banging seats continued. Just at that moment, Thayer cried, in a tone of delight:

"Hello! Why, there's Oswald Webb. See that man just coming down the aisle behind the usher. He's stopping now about a dozen rows from the front, — the tall, big chap."

Evelyn did not need these directions; she was already noting the figure. Oswald Webb's face, too, seemed to have filled out a little, to have lost its haggard look.

"He's a Boston literary man," Thayer explained.
"I used to know him when I was in college, and a splendid fellow he was, too. He's written a couple of capital novels, but they're almost forgotten now, except in Boston. They hardly know his name in New York. I believe he lost his wife a little while ago. She was a queer sort of woman, and I guess she didn't make life very easy for him."

"I know him," said Evelyn, half-apologetically.

"Why, yes, you come from Boston, don't you? Isn't he a fine fellow? I wish I'd known he was in town," Thayer went on, regretfully, watching Webb, as he carefully unfolded his programme and scanned the cast. "I should have sent him some seats if I'd had to pay for them mysel. He was the first editor in Boston to encourage my budding literary genius. I sent him a story, and he ran

seats if I'd had to pay for them mysels. He was the first editor in Boston to encourage my budding literary genius. I sent him a story, and he ran it into the Sunday supplement of his paper, and sent me a fine letter — I've got it now — and asked me to come to see him. There was just a tinge of melancholy about him that made me wonder a



good deal. He wasn't much more than thirty then, either."

Several of the actors began to gather on the stage and in the wings. In the glare of light, with their faces covered with paint and powder, and their heads enshrouded in thick wigs, they were grotesque figures. Leonard Thayer looked at them with curiosity. Evelyn could see from the expression of his face that he was amused.

Presently the orchestra began to play. "I feel a kind of sinking," said Thayer, putting his hand to his heart. "I wonder if playwrights have stage-fright."

"I should think they would," Evelyn replied.

"In a few moments the agony will begin," he said, with an expression of burlesque misery upon his face.

"You aren't very complimentary," said Evelyn, reproachfully.

"Oh, I beg your pardon. I didn't mean you. I'm not afraid of you. I'm afraid of myself, my work, of the audience, and Davidson."

"Davidson is very popular, you know."

"But he'll spoil my piece," said Thayer, with a touch of sincerity in his tone.

The stage-manager came rushing on the stage. "How is everything? All right?" he asked, excitedly, turning here and there to make sure that the scene had been properly set. No one replied, and he disappeared again. In a few moments he returned. "Are you all right, Miss Johnson?" Evelyn bowed, and walked over and sat in the seat by the table, where, on the rise of the curtain, she was to be discovered with a letter in her hand. "Oh,



Thayer, how are you? Great night! Nervous? Why aren't you in front? Can't have authors on the stage, you know."

"Oh, don't mind me." Thayer laughed, walking into the wings. "I'm going to get out, anyway."

As she sat in the chair, Evelyn felt a tremor, which speedily developed into terror. She thought of all that the evening might mean to her: the success or failure of her whole career. But she must gather courage; she must go on. She had a fantastic impulse to rush out into the wings, and to escape from the theatre by the stage-door. But when the orchestra ceased playing and the hush of expectancy followed, her nervousness passed suddenly away. For a moment the chatter was hushed; then a bell rang. The great curtain rose slowly. Evelyn felt herself in a flood of light confronted by a mass of darkness. She heard a little applause, that seemed to come from a distance, and she waited till it ceased. Then she thought that her power of speech had left her; but, when she made an effort, the words came easily enough, and, with a sudden sense of elation, she spoke the opening lines.

XXXI.

The first scene kept Evelyn on the stage for more than half the act; but she had very little to say; so she was able to look about the house. The auditorium was so dark that she could distinguish the faces of those only who sat in the first few rows of the orchestra.

The first act was received quietly; it was too "literary" to excite enthusiasm, even in a first-night audience, and it served chiefly as a preparation for the development of the plot. After the curtain fell, the wiseacres in the lobby shook their heads. "Very foolish of Thayer to go in for playwriting," said young Walter Spencer, who had himself written two successful dramas. "A novelist can't do it. Novel-writing and play-writing are utterly distinct." The remark was overheard by a young reporter of *The Dispatch*, who quoted it derisively the next day. Unfortunately, the reporter did not hear Spencer's comment between the second and third acts.

"Clever of Thayer to hold himself in at the beginning and then to let himself go so." It was in this act that Helen Gordon had her great scene; she had to express rage and scorn, which finally gave way to tears and grovelling appeals for mercy. The situation was not new, but Thayer had handled



it with freshness and power, and Helen Gordon played it strongly. From the beginning of the scene, she seemed inspired. Evelyn thought, as she watched her from the wings, that Thayer would have to change his opinion of her; to-night Miss Gordon certainly acted with heart as well as with her head. She moved in a dramatic ecstasy; even after she left the stage, she walked excitedly up and down behind the scenes, as if she were still living her part. Her comrades paid to her the rare compliment of being awed into silence in her presence; during the performance, when she was not on the stage, she scarcely spoke.

Evelyn had no opportunity to assert herself until the third, which was also the last act. Her work in the first two acts called for quiet treatment, which interested without stirring the audience. At the opening of the act, Evelyn stood in the wings, with Madge Guernsey beside her. "We ain't in it with her," said Madge, nodding to Helen Gordon, who stood in the centre of the stage. Miss Gordon was acting easily, deliberately, effectively, with a fine elaboration of stage business. Now, Evelyn thought, she was "all head." Even Madge's dislike of the actress for the moment was subdued into admiration. "She is great," Madge acknowledged, pensively.

"Yes," said Evelyn, rousing herself, as the time approached for her cue to be given. "She's wonderful."

derful.

"Go in and win," said Madge, patting Evelyn affectionately on the back. "Now's your chance."

Evelyn heard the cue, and the next moment the middle-aged adventuress and her girlish rival stood

face to face. For once in her career, Helen Gordon looked her part; she had been able to create the illusion of beauty faded by the ravages of vicious life. Their scene began quietly and developed to a climax, in which the girl defied the adventuress. The power of Miss Gordon's acting stimulated Evelyn, made her feel as she had felt that night in Yonkers when she played with Harold Seymour. After the outburst of righteous indignation and contempt, as she left her enemy on the stage, the house rang with applause. Madge, who had been joined by Harry Davidson, was jumping up and down on her toes. "It was great! It was great!" she cried, seizing Evelyn by both hands.

Harry Davidson was smiling down at her. "You've made a hit," he said. This was generous, for he himself had not made a hit; but, after all, he was too indifferent to care; the public would come to see him as usual.

In spite of her own success and Evelyn's, Madge was not satisfied. She had expected an offering from Jimmy Wise, and it hadn't come. "The mean thing," she said to Evelyn. "Not a rose! Well, I'll pay him back."

"It serves you right, Madge, for playing fast and loose with him," said Evelyn, as she hastily arranged the collar of her new frock.

The last act was even stronger than the second had been, and at Helen Gordon's triumphant defeat at the close — her death scene was a masterpiece of realism — and Evelyn's vindication, the audience made a vigorous demonstration. As Evelyn had said, it was Miss Gordon's night; but she herself, on her appearance in the procession of actors



that filed before the green curtain, received spontaneous applause. Madge, too, was greeted with hand-clapping and laughter.

On her dressing-room table Evelyn found a note from Oswald Webb. It had been written on a card, and contained the request that he might see her after the performance. He would come around with his friend Bowers, the poet, who wanted to meet her.

Madge had preceded Evelyn, and was hastening to escape from the theatre.

"What's your hurry?" Evelyn asked.

"Oh, I promised Willie Boyd I'd get ready as soon as I could. He wasn't on in the last act, you know, and he's waiting for me."

"So soon, Madge?" said Evelyn, with a smile.
"Got to make a beginning some time," Madge replied.

As Evelyn went out into the dimly lighted passageway that led down into the wings, she saw several groups of people standing about. The largest group consisted of Helen Gordon's friends. Miss Gordon had not removed her red dress, her red hat with red feathers, and she made a startling picture as she stood there laughing and talking. Evelyn speedily found Oswald Webb and his friend chatting with Leonard Thayer. He presented Stafford Bowers, who at once plunged into elaborate eulogy.

"Oh," said Leonard Thayer, pointing his finger at her reproachfully, when the poet had paused for breath, "what a deceiver you are! You never told me."

[&]quot;Never told you what?" Evelyn asked, smiling.



"Why, that you and Mr. Webb were old friends."

"We're not exactly old friends," she laughed, emphasising the adjective.

"But we're very good friends," Webb interposed, with the air of making a joke.

"Friendship is a matter of temperament, not of time," said Bowers, with a smile.

Webb began to laugh. "Oh, we have temperament enough. That is, Miss Johnson has. She's proven that to-night."

"You pleased even me," said Thayer, jocosely, rising on his toes.

"Thank you," she replied, "but Miss Gordon deserves all the compliments."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Thayer. "I shouldn't dare go near her. The author isn't in it."

"That happens too often nowadays," said the poet, for the moment seemingly oblivious of Evelyn's presence. "We forget that the actor is only an interpreter, and we don't give the real creator credit."

Some people that Evelyn didn't know came up to speak to Thayer, and the poet began to talk with the stage-manager. So Evelyn was able to speak with Oswald Webb for a few moments alone. He asked if she were going to drive home, and she shook her head.

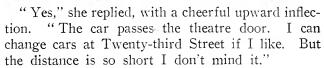
"Oh, no. I've not got to that yet. I shall go home in a Broadway car."

"But not alone?"

"Oh, yes."

He looked shocked. "Will you have to do that every night?"





"But it seems — it seems dangerous to me — in New York," he said, with a pained look.

"Oh, there's no danger," she replied, laughing.

"Well, you'll let me go home with you, anyway, to-night, won't you?"

It was nearly midnight when they reached the boarding-house. "I've got my article to write yet," Webb remarked, as he bade Evelyn good night.

"Your article? Are you going to write one to-night? And send it to Boston?"

"Of course. I can do it in three-quarters of an hour, and at half-past one the printers will begin setting it up. To-morrow morning Mrs. Bowen will read it at Appleby Terrace, and in the afternoon I'll read it in print at the hotel and send it over to you. It reminds me of my old newspaper days."

The next morning Evelyn read the press notices in bed, as she and Madge had done in Cohasset. The play was treated very conservatively; the critics all pronounced it too "literary," but as Leonard Thayer had already made a name as a novelist, they would probably have said that anyway. On the whole, the critics agreed that, though "Deception" could not be regarded as a "permanent contribution to the drama," it was a very good first attempt, and the cleverness of the dialogue would doubtless give it a run. These judgments annoyed and disappointed Evelyn; from its reception by the audience she had supposed that the piece was an unqualified success; she had been too hopeful



to realise that nearly all plays produced in New York were received vociferously by the friends of the author at the first performance.

As for the criticism of the acting, Helen Gordon naturally came in for the first mention. The *Record* fairly deluged her with enthusiastic rhetoric. The *Dispatch* wanted to know why she had not been seen in New York before. After Miss Gordon's, the notices of Evelyn's work were the most favourable; though the *Dispatch* thought she developed too strongly the sentimental qualities of Mathilde, several of the critics extolled the refinement and restraint of her style, and the sincerity of her pathos.

Nevertheless, after reading the papers, Evelyn felt depressed; she had been convinced that the piece would run all winter; now it seemed possible that after a few weeks the audience would fall off and the play would be withdrawn. The next day, however, at the eleven o'clock rehearsal, which had been called with a view to pruning the scenes that had dragged, Evelyn found author, actors, and managers in good spirits. They agreed that the play had been "let down easy." "I was afraid they were going to knife me," Leonard Thayer said to Evelyn, and "I tell you," she heard Saunderson exclaim to a strange man standing on the stage, "we've got a money-maker in this piece."

Helen Gordon was exultant. "Won't Jackson be mad when he reads those notices?" she whispered as she stood with Evelyn in the wings. "He'll realise what he's lost. He used to guy me for wanting to be an actress. I wonder what he'll think of it now? Judge Cowdrey was in front last night, and I got the loveliest note from him this



morning. He said there wasn't the shadow of a doubt about the decree, and perhaps I should get it in a couple of weeks, in a month at the most."

Madge, too, was elated. "I've sent every one of my notices to Jimmy," she confided to Evelyn. "I guess he'll be sorry he let that old business of his keep him from coming on."

The pruning-knife of the stage-manager spared Madge, but it did not spare either Evelyn or Miss The scene between the two women in the Gordon. last act was shortened, and some of Evelyn's speeches in her first act were cut. Evelvn was vexed, but not nearly so resentful as Miss Gordon, who by a subtle process detected jealousy on the part of Saunderson. "He wants to keep me down," she said to Evelyn, with tears of anger in her eyes. "He's afraid I'll strike for a higher salary, I suppose."

In the afternoon Oswald Webb called on Evelyn. He appeared to be unusually cheerful. "New York intoxicates me," he said. "I feel as if there were champagne in the air. I should like to live here."

"Would you really like it better than Boston?"

"Oh, a thousand times. I don't think I've ever been in sympathy with Boston. It may seem strange for me to say that. But I have a theory that no one can be a real Bostonian — that is, can feel that he belongs to Boston — unless he was born there and lived there all his life. Bostonians never think so well of people from other cities as they do of themselves. I've always felt that they regarded me as an alien"

Evelyn made no reply, and Webb went on: "I must confess that I don't like the self-conscious excellence of Boston, and as for Cambridge, the atmosphere there is stifling to me. Perhaps that's because I'm not a Harvard man myself; perhaps it's because I've had to endure the patronage of so many Harvard men in Boston," he concluded, with a whimsical smile.

For a long time they discussed Leonard Thayer's play. Webb was amused by Evelyn's account of Thayer's behaviour at the rehearsals. "He always was an impatient fellow," he said. "But he'll get over that after he's married."

As he rose to leave, Evelyn said: "You haven't shown me your novel. Are you going on with it?" She thought she saw him flush faintly.

- "I haven't done a thing with it since I wrote you," he replied. "I've been very busy and then I suddenly lost interest and energy. It seemed dull to me mechanical."
- "But do you think a writer can ever judge his own work?"
- "I don't know," he replied, thoughtfully, "I used to think I could judge mine, but now I seem to have lost my old point of view and my new one doesn't satisfy me. I've lost confidence in myself. But perhaps," he added, with a smile, "if you keep prodding me, it will come back."

XXXII.

In his column review, Oswald Webb predicted that the piece would run in New York throughout the season, and would exert a wholesome influence on the drama; it proved conclusively that literary men could write plays, and it was to be hoped that other American novelists, even if they were not romantic novelists, would profit by Thayer's example and turn their attention to the theatre, which they had too long neglected. To Evelyn the article seemed in style and in analysis far superior to any of the criticisms that had appeared in the New York Webb's sympathetic study of Thayer's methods, his eulogy of Miss Gordon — he gave Evelyn a half-dozen lines of commendation for her naturalness and restraint — and his summing up of the whole performance was so skilfully done that she could hardly believe that the article had been written under pressure.

The piece, however, failed to win immediate success. For the first few nights the audiences were large; then, when a period of hot September weather followed, they fell off. But early in October they increased in size, though on no evening for the next few weeks could the theatre have been said to be crowded. Saunderson, however, seemed to be satisfied with the receipts. At first it was reported that after three weeks the play would be taken off, and



there was consternation among the actors, who feared that just at the beginning of the season they would be thrown out of employment. Then a rumour spread that the management intended to force the run to four or five months, and with the prestige thus acquired to send the company on the road. But several of the critics in their weekly reviews expressed doubts as to the chance of such a play as "Deception" winning favour in any city outside New York, with the exception of Boston; it was just the kind of play Boston would like. It may have been these comments that inspired Helen Gordon with the belief, which she communicated to Evelyn, that as soon as the piece was withdrawn in New York it would be taken to Boston for a run.

One afternoon, as Evelyn was about to ascend the steps of the boarding-house in Twenty-third Street, she observed Leonard Thayer hesitating on the sidewalk. There was a puzzled look on his face which disappeared when she bowed to him. He ran laughing up the steps.

"I thought it was you," he said, offering his hand, "but I wasn't sure. I knew you lived somewhere along here, but I had forgotten the number. May I come in?"

As they entered the house, Evelyn tried to think of something to say, but she was unable to evolve a thought. Leonard Thayer seemed to be in the same predicament. At last, with an evident effort, he remarked:

"It's very pleasant round here."

She looked into his face and they both laughed. After that they felt more at ease.

"Do you think so?" she said. "Why, I think

it's hideous. And then it is so noisy. The cablecars are passing all the time."

"Oh, yes, I should think it would be noisy. But it's central and it's near Madison Square, and Madison Square is the most beautiful spot in the world to me."

"That's because you've always lived here," she said.

"Don't you like New York?" he asked, in surprise.

"I used to dislike it very much," she replied, evasively.

"That means you like it now?"

"Oh, no, hardly so strong as that. I dislike it less, that's all."

"When you've been here a few years you'll think there's no place in the world to compare with it. After a few more Metropolitan successes," he insinuated.

"More?" she replied.

"Why, yes, more," he went on, briskly. "You certainly have made one great success. You've saved my piece."

"Oh, no, no!" Evelyn protested. "Miss Gordon!"

"Miss Gordon, of course; but she's a show all by herself. I can't convince myself that I've evolved the character that she plays. She's made it something else, something rare and wonderful, something I hadn't intended it to be." As Evelyn made no comment, he went on. "But you've told people what I was driving at. If you weren't in the play, there wouldn't be anything of mine in it at all. You know Davidson has ruined Oglethorpe,



and there are only three characters of any importance in the piece."

"Ah, but Miss Gordon is very good. She has made the hit," said Evelyn, more to keep talking

than to do justice to her comrade.

"I dare say she has made the hit," Thayer replied, with a half-contemptuous laugh. "It may be that I don't appreciate her; but you have worked out my ideas. If another Helen Gordon had your part I shouldn't recognise my play. You know Saunderson cut it frightfully. They're always changing things, these managers."

"But you liked her at rehearsals," Evelyn insisted, ignoring the last part of his remarks, and secretly pleased at the chance of paying him back for his severity before the first night, though now she was glad that he had been so strict with her.

"She was the only one you did like."

"I admired her," he corrected, politely. Then he went on: "Yes, I suppose I liked her, too; she certainly had no technical faults. There was nothing for me to criticise. She looked at Mrs. Gwynne, it seemed to me, from a woman's point of view. She didn't soften her in the least."

"Do you mean she looked at her as women look

at the faults of other women?"

"I'm afraid I do," he acknowledged. "Miss Gordon acts as if she felt no pity for the character. She makes her as hard — well, as she knows how to make her," he concluded, grimly.

"And do you think all women are like that?" Evelyn asked, with a smile. "I mean toward each

other's faults?"

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- "No, I don't," he replied, promptly, perceiving the drift of her question and realising the danger.
- "But I thought you just said you did," Evelyn cried, showing, as many a woman does, unusual courage and aggressiveness in the defence of her sex.
- "Perhaps I did generalise too much. I usually do," he said. "I didn't expect you to pick my remark to pieces."
- "I didn't mean to pick it to pieces, either; but I've heard people talk just like that before," Evelyn retorted, softening her remarks with a smile.

"Literary men are always generalising," he said, deprecatingly. "You mustn't take us too seriously."

"Miss Gordon isn't a fair example of women," said Evelyn.

- "Oh, please don't go on with that," he said, with assumed ruefulness. "I've confessed that I'm wrong. I'm afraid you are trying to pay me back."
 - "Pay you back? For what?"
 - "Why for being so so rude to you."
 - "This afternoon, do you mean?"
- "No. This afternoon? Have I been rude this afternoon? I meant to be utterly impersonal. You don't take what I said seriously, do you?"

She laughed softly into the handkerchief that she had been holding in her hand. She was surprised at the novelist's lack of perspicacity.

"I am afraid there are some things about women that you don't know," she said.

"Then you must teach me. You do know what I really meant, don't you?"

"Of course. You meant that you were rude



to me at the rehearsals, when you made me cry," she replied, mercilessly.

"Cry? Did I make you cry?" he said, with consternation in his face.

She bowed very seriously, still holding the handkerchief over her mouth.

"What a brute you must think I am!" he said, leaning over toward her with his gloves in his clasped hands.

"Oh, no, I didn't. Madge did, though — Miss

Guernsey."

"And did I make her cry, too?"

"No, you didn't. It isn't so easy to make Madge

cry. But you - you exasperated her."

"And I made you cry," he repeated, absently, apparently not having heard her last remark. He took it so seriously that she was sorry she had said anything about it.

"It was nothing," she said, trying to assume a light manner. "I was very nervous, I was afraid of failing, that was all." Her advantage was slipping

away from her.

"And I made it all the harder for you. Well—well!"

He sat for a long time bending forward and clasping his gloves in silence. At last he raised his eyes to her face without moving his head and said:

"I suppose you'll never forgive me."

"Oh, yes, I shall," she replied, with relief at the breaking of the spell.

"Do they all hate me?" he said, with a little smile, "all the company?"

"Do you want me to tell you the truth?"



"Of course. I can't imagine your doing anything else."

"Would it make any difference to you if they did hate you?"

He appeared to ponder the matter deeply, as if it were of great importance. "Why, yes," he replied at last. "I don't want any one to hate me. Don't you think that every one wants to be liked? Some people pretend they don't, but they really do."

"And does it make any difference to you whether actors like or dislike you?" she repeated.

"Why do you say it in that way?" he said, lifting his head quickly. "Actors? Why not actors as well as any other people?"

"Because you have a contempt for actors. You regard us as a kind — well, as queer people."

"Oh, no, no!" he cried, laughing and flushing. "I'm sure you aren't fair to me. Why do you think so?"

"Why, you showed it at rehearsals. By the way you treated us. We all felt it."

"And did they — did the others say so?"

"No, they didn't; but they felt it just the same."

He leaned his head on his hands with his elbows on his knees, and didn't speak for several moments. Then he said, looking up again, "You are quite right, I do — or, rather, I did — regard them as - as queer. But you've given me a new point of view," he went on. "Now, you don't seem to me in the least queer."

"Oh, I'm only commonplace." She smiled, to hide her embarrassment. She was afraid he was going to compliment her again, but he only said:



"I suppose we're all narrow. We live in our little worlds and every one of us thinks that his little world is the whole world, and if anything happens to be outside, why, it doesn't count. I used to imagine that the world of literature was the broadest and freest of all, but now I see that it is about as narrow as the rest of them. It has its little regulations and its prejudices and its conceits. Oh, yes, plenty of conceits."

"There aren't many Shakespeares," said Evelyn, vaguely wondering whether her remark was silly or clever.

"No, Shakespeare's world was broad enough. But it's something to realise that your own is narrow."

Then they talked of many things, most of them connected with the theatre. His knowledge of actors surprised her. Though he knew few of them personally, he seemed to be familiar with the histories of all the important players; he even knew about minor members of the profession whose work had attracted his attention. There were no more awkward pauses in the conversation. When finally he rose from his seat and offered his hand, she said, "Must you go?"

"Yes. I've made a long call already. But I like to talk about the theatre. Besides, you've done me good. You must help me to be broader and more just to women — and to actors."

She went out into the hall with him. The house reeked with stale odours, and seemed to be darker and dingier than ever. She felt as if she ought to apologise for it, but she resisted the temptation. He, however, must have divined her feeling, for to

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break the momentary embarrassment between them, he said:

"What a quaint old place this is!"

Evelyn laughed. "It's certainly old enough."

"I should like to live in such a place for awhile. We live up-town, in Madison Avenue, among the strait-laced people. I'm just enough of a Bohemian to appreciate the pleasures of not being genteel. I once wanted to take some rooms downtown, way over on the East Side, just after I left college and began writing. I wanted to live there for awhile and see 'the other half.' But the Mater objected so much that I gave up the scheme. So I just prowl around now."

"Were you prowling when you passed here?"

Evelyn asked.

"Well, yes, in a sort of a way. I was going down to a little shop in Twenty-third Street, where they sell old prints and old photographs of actors. Some of them are great finds. I keep a collection of theatrical celebrities. They promised to hunt up an engraving of Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse for me. You've seen that, haven't you? They said they might have it to-day. Do you know the place?"

"No," Evelyn replied. ." I don't go about much."

"Well, I'll take you there sometime if you'll come," he said, eagerly. "It's very interesting. And I'll take you to some of the old book-shops in Fourth Avenue, too."

XXXIII.

THE embarrassment that Evelyn felt during Leonard Thayer's call made her discontented and restless at the boarding-house. But for the present at least she decided to content herself in her humble quarters. After the third week of "Deception," however, she heard definitely that the piece would be kept on till February, and even later if the business continued to be satisfactory. It was the intention of the management to force the run in New York so that the play might take the road with the prestige of a great metropolitan success. was thought, would more than compensate for the expense of the New York theatre, where Saunderson had to share sixty per cent. of the receipts with the proprietors instead of the usual forty per cent. for theatres out of New York. The new plans gave Evelvn a reason in favour of moving, and it was strengthened, moreover, by an announcement made to Evelyn by Madge Guernsey, that Belle Livingstone wished to let the flat in Seventy-first Street which she and her mother were occupying; Belle Livingstone was just about to go on the road, and her mother was to spend the winter with friends in South Carolina; they had been unable to lease the place, and they felt so desperate about it that they would rent it by the month if they could. They had urged Madge to take it, and Madge urged

Evelyn to keep house there with her; it would be awfully cheap, and the flat was just as pretty as it could be; Belle Livingstone might not be a great actress, but she certainly did have taste. They could keep the old coloured mammy that the Livingstones had; Mrs. Livingstone said she was a jewel.

Evelyn called at the apartment with Madge and met the girl who had been her rival for the part of Mathilde. Belle Livingstone had large, liquid black eyes and jet black hair, with touches of gray in it. As she eyed Evelyn there was an almost bitter look in her face. She had to swallow her pride to urge the girl who had secured the part she had set her heart on playing to take the little home she had made by hard work for herself and her mother; all this Evelyn realised with a feeling of pity that she knew Belle Livingstone, if she had suspected it, would have bitterly resented. Mrs. Livingstone was a little, old-fashioned woman with white hair and a pathetic smile that revealed small, even teeth. She took no pains to conceal the anxiety she felt to let the flat; her daughter was more reserved, but quite as eager.

"You see, we've got some of our furniture," said the old lady. "I left it at my brother's house in Charleston when we broke up after Belle's father And then last spring, when we decided to take this place, I sent for some of it."

"It's very pretty," said Evelyn, looking around.

There was a large parlour leading into a dining-Behind these were two small bedrooms, the kitchen, and the servant's room. Next to the parlour, in front of the house, was another bedroom.



which Madge declared she intended to take for herself.

"It's just my size," she said, as they looked into it. "You can have the nice one next to the diningroom, Evelyn, and we'll save the other for a guest. When mother comes on to see me, we'll put her in there."

All of the rooms were tastefully furnished with pieces of furniture that suggested departed wealth. Belle Livingstone's father had been one of the many Southerners ruined by the war. The girl had been brought up in an atmosphere of shabby gentility, and after her father's death, when she was about twenty-two, she had chosen to go on the stage. Since that time she had dragged wearily in second-class companies from one end of the country to the other. She had a certain talent, but she was too large, too statuesque for ordinary purposes; Evelyn saw at once that the part of Mathilde would have been unsuited to her.

"We were crazy to take this flat," she said, when she and her mother had shown their callers all the rooms. "It's on our hands till next October, unless we sublet it."

"What made you do it?" asked Madge.

"Oh, I'd set my heart on a New York engagement," she replied, with a despairing carelessness. "And I made up my mind just to settle down here for the summer and get it. I thought it would be a kind of incentive if I took the flat; I'd have to get it then. I thought I was going to do the part you've got, Miss Johnson," she added, with a melancholy laugh, turning to Evelyn. "I suppose we couldn't both have it. But now that you've got it,

I hope you'll take the flat," she concluded, trying to veil her anxiety under a feeble show of humour.

"I like it very much," Evelyn replied.

"When do you go out, Belle?" Madge asked.

"Next week. We open in Albany. The road again!"

Madge relieved the tension by saying, "It is beastly, ain't it?"

"I do wish you'd take the flat," said Belle.

"We'll make the price very low," added her mother.

Pity for her defeated rival persuaded Evelyn. "I think we'd better decide to take it, Madge," she declared, after a moment's silence.

"All right," cried Madge. "Then it's a bargain."

"Now we must speak of terms," said the old

lady, with a display of her white teeth.

"We ought to pay you at least what you're paying now," said Evelyn, promptly. And when she saw Madge's face drop, she went on, "Of course, when you hire a flat by the year, you get it cheaper than when you hire it by the month."

"Exactly," Mrs. Livingstone agreed, with a long sigh. She could hardly credit the good fortune Evelyn's first speech had promised, and she had held her breath for fear that the second remark would contain some shattering condition. She looked nervously at her daughter, apparently fearing the girl was going to destroy the prospect.

"We had intended to offer you the flat for less," said Miss Livingstone, with the air of resisting

a temptation not to speak.

A shadow fell upon her mother's face, and the



old lady turned appealingly to Evelyn. The expression in Madge's eyes said plainly to Evelyn, "Oh, I wish you wouldn't be such a goose!"

"I'm sure that what you are now paying would be satisfactory to me," said Evelyn, who already knew the amount. "Wouldn't it to you, Madge?"

"Ye-es," said Madge, with an inflection free from enthusiasm.

"And then we ought to pay for the furniture," Evelyn went on.

"No," said Belle Livingstone, firmly. "As long as you are going to pay full rent, we'll let you have the use of the furniture."

"When will you want to come in?" asked Mrs. Livingstone. "We go away on Saturday."

"I shall have to give at least a week's notice at my boarding-house," Evelyn replied.

The details of the arrangement were quickly considered. Mrs. Livingstone showed her appreciation of Evelyn's generosity by offering to leave in the flat the necessary housekeeping things, including even her china and table-linen, of which she seemed to be proud. "I know I can trust you," she said, with a smile at Evelyn, and as they were leaving Belle Livingstone said, quietly, "I'm glad you got the part."

When they arrived at the flat they found nearly everything that they had noticed during their first visit; yet the soul of the place seemed gone. Evelyn quickly perceived that this effect was due to the removal of such little personal articles as photographs and ornamental trinkets, which had given the place a look of home, and to the rigid regularity in the arrangement of the furniture. The Living-

stones had shown perfect taste in their disposal of their property before their departure; everything that was distinctly personal had disappeared. Evelyn and Madge set to work at once to infuse a new soul into the place, and in a few hours they had made the apartment their own. When their work was done they sat down in the parlour, looked into each other's faces and sighed with content. This was Evelyn's first real home, and she was prepared to enjoy it.

Madge gazed about rapturously. "How nice

and pretty everything is."

"And to think that we've earned it all, Madge!"

said Evelyn.

They quickly settled down to their life in Seventyfirst Street, and they soon felt as if they had been keeping house together for years. To Evelyn, after her travelling, her lonely days in dismal hotels, it seemed almost an ideal existence; when Madge sometimes complained of the monotony, she replied that it was just what she liked; it was so delightful after the irregularity, the fever of her life on the road. The Livingstones had left their library, and Evelyn found it stocked with the best of the modern writers; she read chiefly fiction, and occasionally she dipped into biographies and collections of essays that she found there; she made her first acquaintance with Balzac and Miss Austen. Belle Livingstone had collected a number of books on the drama and on actors, and these Evelyn read eagerly; but they did not give her what she was always seeking, the justification of the dramatic art. She had read all the eulogies of it she could find, and she had agreed with most of the sentiments these con-



tained; but they did not satisfy her, they did not remove the feeling that chafed her, that there was something inherently unworthy in the work of an actor. It was degrading to give up one's identity, to use the body for the personification of a character not one's own, to defile it with paint, to disguise it in fantastic dress. Perhaps it was a weakness, perhaps it was foolish for her to feel so; Madge certainly did not; she would not dare ever to mention to Madge her scruples; Madge would only laugh. Evelyn knew that her feelings on the subject were contradictory; surely the actor's art was a fine art when practised by the great players. Why, then, should it be ignoble when practised by any of the smooth-faced familiar gentlemen of whom she had a secret horror, the men she met in the wings at night, hideous in the glare of electric light, more hideous at matinées in the glare of the day? Once in a letter to Oswald Webb - he had sent her a copy of a famous actor's "Autobiography," which she had read before thanking him for it — she spoke of this feeling. He replied at once that he had a firm faith in the stage; he believed that acting was worthy of ranking with the creative arts. She replied that in her opinion the actor was in no sense a creator; he merely developed ideas; he was the artisan that worked out the suggestions of the artist. This led to another letter from him, in which he advanced arguments of his own and quoted arguments from others, and brought up such a long list of authorities on his side that she felt appalled, and, though unconvinced, she dropped the discussion. She knew the futility of arguing against a feeling.



She continued to hear occasionally from Oswald Now and then he would send her books which he had been reviewing, and which he thought would interest her; with these he sometimes sent his reviews, and she was interested to compare his judgments with her own. His scope on the paper, he told her, had widened considerably; in addition to his reviewing and dramatic work, he wrote editorials occasionally, chiefly on literary topics. She ventured to say that she thought he was doing too much, and he replied that he had to keep busy. It was in her answer to this letter that she asked if he were going on with his novel. His reply was jocose; he hadn't gone on with the story, he had lost faith in it; he was afraid that his facility had left him; he couldn't hope now to be anything more than a mere newspaper hack; but he still had the first few chapters in his desk; if Miss Johnson cared to read them, he should be glad to send them on; she needn't be afraid of his odious handwriting; he had had them typewritten. She answered immediately that she should be delighted to read the chapters. said that he wished to make a few revisions before submitting the sheets to her; he was afraid of her criticisms; he hoped she wouldn't think he was forcing the manuscript on her, and she must promise not to let it bore her, to drop it as soon as it became tiresome.

During this exchange of letters, Madge Guernsey herself conducted a brisk correspondence with Jimmy Wise; in no way did she allow the attentions of Willie Boyd, her fellow player and nightly escort from the theatre, to interfere with this pastime. Every morning Madge watched eagerly for the mail,

and in her search for Jimmy's brief, businesslike notes, she was obliged to scrutinise the letters that came for Evelyn. She knew the handwriting of Mrs. Bowen and the Stearns boys and Ned Osgood, who, after Oswald Webb, were Evelyn's most faithful correspondents, and she had become acquainted with Webb's by a chance, which had once caused him to send Evelyn a note enclosed in an Argus envelope. Madge frequently read Jimmy's letters aloud, with shrieks of laughter, and she felt piqued because Evelyn did not read Oswald Webb's. At the breakfast-table one morning Evelyn received a large package in a familiar handwriting; she allowed it to lie unopened beside her plate. Madge was soon absorbed in a smiling perusal of a communication from Providence: when she had finished, she looked at Evelyn's package, and said, with a knowing glance:

"You think you're awfully cute, don't you?"

"What do you mean, Madge?"

"Don't you suppose I know where that came from?"

"It came from Boston."

"Boston! Boston's a wonderful place. They have wonderful men there. Oh, you are deep."

"I didn't know that I was, Madge," said Evelyn, with a laugh and with an instinctive dread of what was coming.

"I always thought he was fond of you," said Madge, with pretended carelessness, tasting her coffee. "What nice coffee Charity makes."

Evelyn dropped her fork on the plate. "You mustn't say such things, Madge."

"Oh, you silly! And you getting letters from him—long, long letters, a mile long!" Madge



cried, throwing out her arms in extravagant burlesque. Then she dropped her arms, pressed her elbows on the table, rested her face in her hands, and said, "Has he proposed yet?"

"You're talking nonsense, Madge," Evelyn replied, quietly. "Mr. Webb has been kind to me, that's all. You forget that his wife died only a few months ago."

"His wife, such a wife!" Madge mocked.

"He's merely interested in me on account — on account of my work, on account of my being an actress," cried Evelyn, egged on by a feverish desire to justify herself.

"Then he'll marry you on account of your being

an actress."

"You are altogether mistaken, Madge," retorted Evelyn, almost petulantly. "He wouldn't — he wouldn't marry an actress."

"He wouldn't!" Madge indignantly exclaimed. "Then he's no man at all. Wouldn't marry an actress! Well, I declare, I'd like to hear him say so. I guess he'd never say it again, and I guess you're good enough for any man, and much too good for a man like him. He never would have amounted to anything if he hadn't married a rich wife. That's all he married her for, just because she was rich. Not marry an actress! There, now. Oh, I didn't mean anything. Oh, you baby!"

XXXIV.

Evelyn's outbreak not only shocked, but mystified Madge; in her opinion, men were not to be taken seriously; they were to be used to fetch and carry, to be made sport of, to be loved as long as they continued interesting and humble. She did not believe in platonic friendships, and her only explanation of Evelyn's correspondence with the Boston editor was that Oswald Webb wanted to marry Evelyn; the only possible cause of Evelyn's agitation that she could think of was his delay in proposing. Madge had seen Evelyn when she was in love with Harold Seymour; there had been no doubt about it that time. Now, however, Evelyn had the air of being a "free woman," and Madge had a theory that love was a kind of slavery. Altogether, the situation was unaccountable.

As for Evelyn herself, she speedily felt ashamed of having lost self-control. She had left the table, shut herself up in her room, and cried for several minutes. When she went back to the dining-room and secured the package, Madge had already gone out.

"You ain't teched your coffee, honey," said Charity, reproachfully, as Evelyn started to return to her room.

"I don't believe I want any this morning. Yes,



I think I will take a cup of coffee. Get me a fresh cup, Charity."

Instead of going back to her room, Evelyn sat down at the writing-desk in the parlour. In the tumult of feelings which her tears had caused, she had decided to return the manuscript to Oswald Webb unopened, and to say that she did not feel competent to pass judgment on it. She would not give him any reason to think that she was leading him on, trying to pry into his life, to have a part in it. Of course that was what Madge had meant, that she was flirting with a man whose position in life was so different from her own. But the coffee straightened out her logic, made her perceive her injustice to Madge, to Oswald Webb, and to herself. If she sent back that manuscript after expressing a desire to read it, Mr. Webb would think that she either didn't care to take the trouble to examine it, or that she was a woman of quixotic impulses; besides, he would probably abandon the task

When Evelyn opened the package, she found that there were eight chapters in all, each separate, the pages held together with a clasp in the upper left-hand corner; no name had as yet been given to the story. Evelyn glanced rapidly from sheet to sheet, and saw that Webb had made many verbal corrections and transpositions and eliminations to improve the style. In a few places he had changed names, in every instance supplying names full of character. Then she began at the first page, and, without rising from her seat, she read the manuscript throughout.

The story dealt with the life of a young literary

man who had married a woman of intense religious feeling; he was himself an agnostic, and the discussions of religion and philosophy which the two had together were, at the close of the eighth chapter, just beginning to undermine the wife's faith; the climax of the chapter consisted of the woman's passionate prayer to be saved from the darkness of unbelief. The character studies were keen, and here and there were flashes of wit and of epigram and delightful paradoxes that relieved the melancholy burden of the narrative. The undertone of sadness that Evelyn had discovered in the other stories Webb had written seemed intensified; it was as if he had come to regard the world as a desert of pain with only occasional oases of happiness. The maturer work was, of course, far stronger than the others; she wondered how Oswald Webb could have felt doubtful about it: but she really liked the others better.

When she finished reading it was nearly time for luncheon. Madge was evidently lunching with one of her friends at a down-town restaurant. At table Evelyn thought over what she should say, and after eating she began to write her first literary criticism. In the heat of composition she found herself stating theories and opinions that she had never before suspected herself of believing. She began by telling of her interest in the story, and of her eagerness to know its development and ending; it would be a great pity, a great shame, not to go on with it; then she went into an analysis of the wife's character. In her opinion, the wife wouldn't have shown how shocked she had been at discovering her husband's lack of faith; a woman of her strong



faith and character would have concealed her horror, and trusted in her own faith to help her bring back her husband to the truth; this deep trust would have calmed her, would have given her a spiritual exaltation which, with Mr. Webb's skill, might be very effectively described. Then, too, she doubted if a man like the husband would have been so ready to undermine his wife's beliefs; most men, even those with no religion themselves, liked their wives to be religious; they regarded religion as almost a part of a woman's nature. Perhaps she was wrong about these things; she couldn't help speaking of Then, too, there was one thing she wanted particularly to mention, and yet she hated to speak of it; she feared it would seem like an impertinence. Didn't Mr. Webb think there were too many morbid things in the world, and would it not be better if the morbid were kept out of literature altogether? She disliked saying this so much that she thought of tearing up the letter and beginning another, but she said to herself that she would be frank; she felt sure he would understand. As an apology for these criticisms, she praised those parts of the story that had pleased her, dwelling on details that showed how carefully she had read the chapters; she even quoted bits here and there.

When she had finished she read the letter over hastily and then put it with the story, which she at once prepared for the mail. She would send the story back at once, so that he should not think she had delayed in reading it; but her eagerness was really due to a fear that she should repent the writing of the letter and destroy it. Her hand trembled as she put on her hat to go to the local post-office with the package. Her cheeks were hot as she went down the stairs, holding the manuscript under one arm, and rubbing on her long gloves. At the office she had the package weighed, and with a sigh of relief she paid for the stamps and went on.

She hesitated a moment on the doorsteps, uncertain which way to turn. She had intended, after doing her errand, to go home again; but she decided that she had had quite enough literary occupation for one day, and that she would stay out-of-doors for awhile; there was shopping that she had to do. So she started for the elevated station, and took the train for down-town.

At Twenty-third Street she got off and walked in the surging crowd toward Broadway. Suddenly she felt some one clutch her arm; she looked around and saw Mrs. Barton.

The old lady in her decent black, with prim crimps over her smooth forehead, seemed the personification of grandmotherhood.

"My dear child," she said, "come over here in one of these doorways where I can talk to you."

"Wouldn't it be better if we went into the waiting-room?" Evelyn asked. "We can talk there."

"P'raps it would," Mrs. Barton assented, leading the way. "Come along."

"Well, how are you, anyway?" said the old woman, who had curiously youthful mannerisms. Without giving Evelyn time to reply, she went on: "What luck you've had! I've heard all about you through Belle Livingstone. Ah, but you lost him after all, dear," she added, sympathetically, as they approached the waiting-room. She was almost breathless in her eagerness to reach the place, and

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as she talked she had to keep turning to address Evelyn, and looking back to avoid collisions.

"Lost him? What do you mean?" Evelyn asked, as they entered the waiting-room and hunted for seats.

"Here—let's come over here—in the corner here." Mrs. Barton bustled over to the place where two large armchairs were waiting to receive them. "Sit down here! That's all right. It's so good to see you again." She sat down herself, and went on, breathlessly: "Why, I meant about poor dear Harold. What a blow it must have been to you. I'm so glad you made it up and got engaged again."

"We didn't," said Evelyn, helplessly.

"What! Why, I thought — I heard —"

"Yes, I know, but it wasn't true."

Mrs. Barton shook her head. There were aspects of the case that she wished very much to discuss; but she did not dare to ask questions.

"Where are you?" Evelyn asked, allowing one hand to rest in the old woman's affectionate clasp.

"We were going to open next week in Hartford," Mrs. Barton replied, sadly. "I came to town a fortnight ago — from my niece's in Louisville, for rehearsal. Think of the journey! We rehearsed for a week, and then the company disbanded."

"What was the matter?"

"Some trouble about the backing. They had a man named Harlowe. He lost confidence in the piece at the last moment. It was terrible. They didn't even give us a cent for fares."

Mrs. Barton lifted her veil to wipe her eyes. "I don't know what I'm going to do. I've been round to see Mrs. Freeman, and she promised to



look out for something. But everything's filled by this time."

"Where are you living?"

"In Thirty-fourth Street — Mrs. Bird's. She knows me — I've been there before — and she won't press me for money yet awhile. I spent all I made last season on my niece's children. Her husband's been unfortunate, and I couldn't stay there all summer without doing something. It's hard for a woman to be out in the world at my age."

Evelyn looked at Mrs. Barton helplessly. She tried to think of something she could do; suddenly an idea occurred to her. "Oh, I'm awfully glad I met you," she said. "You know Madge Guernsey and I have gone to housekeeping at the Livingstones' flat; I suppose Belle Livingstone told you. Well, we've got lots of room — three bedrooms. We want some one like you with us. Will you come?"

Mrs. Barton's face brightened. "Do you mean to live with you?"

"Yes, keep house with us — be our housekeeper." Evelyn flushed at the thought of breaking the news to Madge.

"Why," said the old woman, "I should like nothing better. Only —"

"You know, if we had a housekeeper, we'd have to pay her," Evelyn went on, "but we can't afford to pay you. But you won't have any board to pay," she added, with a shuddering thought of Madge's resentment.

"Oh, you darling!" cried Mrs. Barton, bending toward Evelyn. "You're the most —" Then she



checked her enthusiasm and shrank back. "But it does seem imposing on you."

"Imposing! Nonsense! Why, you might as well occupy the room. Then you can order the meals for us. Madge and I just hate that."

Evelyn uttered this untruth with an air of fervid sincerity. The novelty of ordering for the table had been to her one of the chief pleasures of housekeeping.

"Well, I'll come," said Mrs. Barton, with the sigh of one who has just passed through a struggle.

"All right. Madge will be glad, too," Evelyn continued, feeling that she was adding lie upon lie. "When will you come?"

"My week's up the day after to-morrow."

Mrs. Barton hesitated. "I — I —"

"What is it?" Evelyn asked. "Do come. I'll be awfully sorry if you don't."

"Well, the fact is," said the old woman, her cheeks shot with a faint flush, "I'm owing Mrs. Bird, and I'm afraid I can't get away—"

Evelyn thrust her hand into her pocket and drew out her purse. "How much? I'll lend it to you."

"Twelve dollars. But I do hate —"

"Hush, hush! I guess I've had to borrow myself in my life. Here! Now, I've got some things to buy, and I must drag up-town for dinner and down again for the theatre. So I'll hurry along. Won't you come, too? Going to stay here? Tired? There, now don't, please don't. And be sure to come before luncheon."

On finishing her shopping Evelyn felt exhausted, and after climbing up the steep steps of the elevated station, she was glad to drop into the seat in the crowded train that was offered her. As she went up-town she thought over the events of the day; it seemed a long time since morning - so many things had happened. She began to worry over the letter she had written to Oswald Webb; now that her fever of enthusiasm was passed, possibly because she was tired, it seemed almost impertinent; when she reached Fiftieth Street she was sorry she had been in such a hurry to send it off; at Fifty-ninth Street she regretted bitterly that she had written it; at Seventy-second Street, where she left the train, she said to herself that she would give almost anything in the world to get it back. She wondered if she could get it. Of course not. The post-office people never returned letters when they had been dropped into the box. But if she explained that she had left the package, and begged them to let her have it again, they might give it up. But by this time it had probably started for Boston; still there was a chance that it had been held for the evening mail. As these thoughts passed through her mind, her steps were mechanically conducting her home. For a moment she stopped, trying to decide whether to go back to the post-office. Anyway, it would be worth trying. So she hurried to the place. But when she arrived there the folly of her errand struck her, and she stood at the door with her hand on the latch looking through the window. Two men were talking with the clerk, and behind the letter-boxes she could see several carriers sorting the mail. One of the men looked around at her, and she turned shamefaced away. She walked up the street a few yards and stood on the curbstone, trying with an agonising effort to



make up her mind whether to go in and ask for the package or to start back for home. While she was hesitating, a policeman slouched along and eyed her suspiciously. With an impulsive movement she turned toward the post-office; then she checked herself, faced in the opposite direction, and hastened back to Seventy-first Street, bending before the fierce October wind.

XXXV.

On reaching home, Evelyn threw herself on her bed, put her hands to her hot temples, and tried for a few moments to rest. Then she rose quickly, and began to prepare for dinner. At the table she ignored the episode of the morning, and told Madge of her meeting with Mrs. Barton and its consequences. At first Madge looked blank; then Evelyn made such a pathetic picture of the old woman's misfortunes that the soubrette's sympathy was touched.

"Well, I s'pose it's kind of tough for a woman at her age to be out of a job. But she's an awful gossip. She'll just pry into our affairs every minute."

"Oh, I guess we can keep our secrets to ourselves if we have any." Evelyn regretted this speech, but Madge generously allowed it to pass with only a faint smile for comment. "Besides," Evelyn went on, feeling that she ought to bear the whole responsibility of her impulse of the afternoon, "I'll pay for her board."

"Well, I guess not. It won't cost any more to have her. She don't eat much. She's so used to stinting herself at hotels that she can't get up an appetite any more."

"Then she'll look after things," said Evelyn,

trying to give Mrs. Barton a legitimate place in the household. "We'll make her our housekeeper."

Madge, after a moment's silence, remarked, with a sigh: "Well, I s'pose I can stand it. You've got to expect these things when you live with a saint."

Mrs. Barton arrived on Friday morning, and at once made herself a member of the family. Her gratitude to Evelyn showed itself in untiring efforts to be of service. The domestic instinct, which in her had been restrained by the exigencies of her profession, asserted itself, and she took delight in managing the little household, in dusting the furniture, in directing Charity in the kitchen, and also in doing some of the cooking herself. She had, besides, a knack at dressmaking, and she made some house dresses for Evelyn and Madge for which they had intended to employ a dressmaker.

One night during the performance Leonard Thayer went behind the scenes and met Evelyn in the wings. "Good evening," he said. "I've come around to ask if you were ready for our expedition."

"What expedition?" she said, looking up into his face.

"Why, to the print-shops. Don't you remember our talk at your boarding-house?"

"Oh, yes. But I thought you had forgotten it. You hadn't spoken of it."

"I wasn't sure you really wanted to go," he replied. "But I'm going to-morrow, and if you're willing I'll call for you in the afternoon."

"I should like that, and can Madge come, too?" "Why, certainly," he said, with a promptness



and with a suggestion of confusion in his voice that made Evelyn wonder if he were really pleased.

She bade Leonard Thayer good-bye and hurried to her dressing-room, where she had to make a change in her make-up. Madge was delighted with her invitation.

"Don't say anything about it to Willie, dear. He's been getting awfully jealous lately. Somebody's been telling him about Jimmy. I wonder if it could be that hateful Helen Gordon?"

"Oh, no," Evelyn replied, as she touched her face deftly with a powder-puff to make herself look pale for her next scene. "She doesn't know anything about Jimmy."

"Well, what she doesn't know isn't worth knowing."

Thayer came the next afternoon and brought with him Franklin Mills, a tall, amiable youth, with a smooth face, a broad smile, and an enormous collar. He explained that he had just picked Mills up at the club, and that Mills had insisted, against his protest, in joining the party; so, as his friend didn't have a thing in the world to do, he had allowed him to come out of pity, just to give him an occupation for the afternoon. Evelyn saw Mills turn upon Thayer a glance of mingled reproach and amusement when the explanation was made, and she drew conclusions. Madge quickly appropriated the stranger, and they started down to the elevated station in great spirits.

As they crossed Twenty-third Street, crowded with shoppers, Thayer said, "I expect to get my Tragic Muse to-day. They had some trouble

about finding me a copy; but they sent me a postcard yesterday, and said they'd discovered one."

"I don't think I've ever seen it," said Evelyn.

"It's fine. I know you'll be impressed. I've wanted a copy for a long time. Are you fond of pictures of actors?"

"No," Evelyn replied, promptly, thinking of the

ghastly array of Mrs. Freeman's.

- "You're not? How curious," he replied. "But I suppose it's because you get so much of the theatre. I've always liked them. I had a big collection of them when I was in college, and now I've got them all and a lot more in my den at home. I'm especially fond of pictures of the old actors. I've found some good ones down at the shop where we're going now. Macready and Forrest and Fanny Kemble are all there. I wish you could see my engraving of Peg Woffington. I'm immensely proud of that. I've even got a picture of Miss O'Neill. You've heard of her, haven't you?"
 - "Never," said Evelyn.
- "You've never heard of Miss O'Neill!" he said, in surprise. She pressed her lips together and shook her head, just as a burly policeman seized her by the arm and prevented her crossing Broadway. Thayer was so absorbed in talking that he hadn't noticed the carriage that came splashing past them.
- "Don't you like to read the lives of actors?" he said, as they resumed their walk. Madge and young Mills were already at some distance ahead of them.
- "I've read only a few," she said. "Most of them seem so empty to me."



This was apparently a new idea to him, and he stopped to consider it.

- "Empty!" he repeated, after a pause. "Why. I've never thought of that. But the subject of the theatre is so fascinating that I never tire of reading about it. But you like the stage, don't vou?"
- "I like it because I can earn my living by it," she replied. "I don't think I like it for anything else."
 - "How odd," he said, half to himself.
- "Odd? Does it seem odd to you that any one should dislike it — the sham of it, and all that?"
- "Oh, I wasn't thinking of that. I was thinking of a remark the Mater made about you the first night of the piece."
 - "What was that?"
- "Oh, she liked you, you know," he said, hastily. "She liked you very much. But she said —" He paused abruptly. Then he went on, "I don't think I'd better tell you. I'm afraid you'll be offended."
 - "No, I sha'n't. I should like to hear."
- "Well," he went on, at last, "now that I've said so much, I might as well out with it. The Mater is awfully sharp. She often gives me points for my stories - not intentionally, but by her observations. She says my women are horrible. That first night - Well, I guess I won't."
- "Oh, you must now, you must." Then, as he hesitated, Evelyn went on, "Oh, I know what it was. She said I wasn't fit for the stage, that I couldn't act, something like that."
 - "Oh, no, no," he exclaimed, with distress in his

eyes, "nothing like that. Now, of course, I'll tell vou."

He looked down into her face and saw that she was smiling. "Oh, that was a little trick," he cried. "How like a woman."

"There you are, abusing women again." She tried to pretend that she was vexed; but she went on smiling in spite of herself.

"I didn't mean to do that," he said, humbly.

"I meant to be complimentary."

"But you haven't told me yet what your mother said."

"Well, she said — it wasn't much, after all, now that we've made a great ado about it. She merely said — you know she liked you — she liked you very much."

"Yes, you said that before."

He seemed to brace himself up for an effort. "She said that your heart wasn't in your work. She said you did Mathilde perfectly, because the character fitted you."

Evelyn looked relieved. "Oh, is that all?"

"I had a row with her on the subject. I insisted that your heart was in your work. Don't you remember I told you the first night that you were all heart?"

"Yes, I remember," she acknowledged, flushing. They walked on in silence for a moment. "So you think the Mater was right?" he said, absently. "I'm surprised. And yet, I don't know. It's a strange life — for a — for a woman. Yet, it's glorious, too. It gives me the old thrill yet. I wanted to go on the stage once myself."

"Why didn't you?"



- "Oh, I don't know. In the first place, I knew it would make the Mater miserable."
 - "Oh!" said Evelyn.
- "And then, I thought it all over, and I decided it would mean giving up too much, and I shouldn't like the life. Besides, I wanted to write."
- "You were wise," she said, thoughtfully. "You wouldn't have liked the life, and you would have despised actors even more than you do now."

By this time they had reached the shop. Madge and her escort were waiting for them on the sidewalk, and looking at the photographs in the window. The dingy little place was filled with pictures of theatrical and literary celebrities, most of them wearing the dress of many years before, and with second-hand books, chiefly novels, offered for sale at amazingly low prices. The photographs of writers interested Evelyn more than the others. Madge discovered a photograph of Helen Gordon, taken apparently during the actress's first season on the stage. Miss Gordon, in her old-fashioned gown and her enormous black hat with plumes, looked many years older than she now seemed. Madge at once purchased the photograph for ten cents, and declared she'd have great fun with it at the theatre. While they were looking at the old prints, the man disappeared in the back of the shop, and presently came back with the picture in his hand that Leonard Thayer had long coveted.

"Ah," Thaver said, seizing it, "so you got it at last!" He looked at it carefully for a moment; then he exclaimed, "And it's an uncommonly fine copy. See how clear it is. Look, Miss Johnson, isn't it fine?"



It was in a cheap frame of gilded wood with a piece of cracked glass over it. "Even the glass doesn't spoil it," said Thayer, as he passed it into Evelyn's hands.

Evelyn held it up so that they could all look at it. They examined it for a moment without speaking.

"It is beautiful," Evelyn said, her face lighted

up with admiration. "Yes, beautiful."

"Doesn't it make you realise how fine dramatic art is?"

"It makes me realise how fine it can be," she replied, without taking her eyes from Mrs. Siddons's face.

"I've a great mind to give it to you. Do you think you could get another?" he asked, turning to the dealer.

The man shrugged his shoulders and a far-away look appeared in his eyes. "Not so good as that," he said. "But I could get another one that would be very good."

"Then you take this," said Thayer, turning, impulsively, to Evelyn. "Won't you, please?"

"Oh, no, no," she said. "I really couldn't. Please don't ask me." She tried to turn her refusal into a joke by adding. "It would be a continued reproach to me for not liking the stage more, and for not being a better actress."

"I really wish you would take it," Thayer said, wistfully. "I can see that you really like it," and "Don't be a ninny," Madge urged, under her breath.

"I'm not really giving it to you, you know," Thayer went on, whimsically. "I'm giving it to Mathilde."



Evelyn flushed. "Well, then, Mathilde will take it. Perhaps she's more worthy of it than I am."

Thayer left orders that the engraving should be sent to Evelyn's address, and shortly afterward they left the place and visited several of the shops in Fourth Avenue. In these Evelyn found many curious things to interest her; old bits of furniture, china, and bric-à-brac, quaint books and pictures, pieces of tapestry, and broken suits of armour. Madge and her escort were greatly bored by "the rubbish," as the soubrette called it.

"My rooms are filled with things that I've picked up in these places," said Thayer. "The Mater chaffs me about them, and they nearly drive the maids crazy. I wish you could see the candelabra that I found here one day, in this very shop, last winter. Oh, this is the side of New York life that I like best. It's so dingy and queer."

It was after five o'clock when they ended their visits to the shops, and Evelyn was nervous for fear they should be late for the theatre.

"We must hurry home, Madge," she said. "We ought not to have stayed so long."

"Well, it was your own fault. Mr. Mills and I are nearly dead. That is," Madge corrected herself just before the young man could interpose, "I should be if he wasn't so interesting."

"Do you think it's worth while going way uptown for dinner?" said Thayer. "It seems a pity to tire yourselves out so for nothing. We might have a little dinner-party together."

"Oh, good!" said Madge.

"No, Madge, I think we'd better go home," Evelyn objected, weakly. "Mrs. Barton will worry."

"Worry! Oh, you'd think we were two kids from the way you talk. I guess Mrs. Barton knows we're able to take care of ourselves."

The combined argument of her companions finally persuaded Evelyn to abandon the trip up-town.

"Can't we go to some lovely Bohemian restaurant?" Madge suggested.

"I know a place that will just suit you, Miss Guernsey," said Thayer.

They walked across to the Fourteenth Street station of the elevated and went down to the Bohemian resort. The squalor of the neighbourhood contrasted oddly with the gleaming white tables, the clean wood floor, the little French pictures on the walls. Indeed, the general respectability of the place and its frequenters distinctly disappointed Madge, who said she had expected something "wicked." They were very gay over the macaroni and the cheap claret, and the queer dishes with French names that Madge pretended to understand, and disgraced herself by trying to pronounce.

The elaborate table d'hôte detained them so long that they had to hurry away to the theatre before they could drink their coffee. But it had been a pleasant afternoon, and it made Evelyn feel young again. During the past year she had begun to feel alarmingly old, like most women nearing thirty.

XXXVI.

OSWALD WEBB had made an immediate acknowledgment of the criticism of his story. He began by complimenting Evelyn on its excellence as a piece of literary workmanship, adding facetiously that when she grew tired of being an actress she might take his place as book reviewer of the Argus. Then he thanked her for the trouble she had taken; he quite agreed with several of her criticisms, and he would alter that scene in the fourth chapter between the husband and wife; but he really did think that a man of Weston's sort — the searching, argumentative, philosophic type — would unconsciously, perhaps, but none the less certainly, try to break down a faith which he believed to be irrational and which was always annoying him; he would forget how much it meant to his wife: in his enthusiasm for what he believed to be the truth, and his love of correct reasoning, he would forget to be tolerant, he would sacrifice anything, even the happiness of the woman he loved. As for the morbidness of the story, Webb was afraid he couldn't help that; perhaps it was the "reflex of his own dark mind." He believed with Miss Johnson that the morbid in literature was dangerous; but, after all, ought not all writers to be allowed to work out their conceptions in their own way? He sometimes felt

that at any cost the freedom and breadth of literature ought to be preserved. As she read, Evelyn felt that the argument was getting beyond her depth; it was absurd of her to rush into such a discussion. However, Oswald Webb's reply had made her banish her regret. He was going on with the work. That was enough.

During the month of November the audiences at "Deception" grew unexpectedly large. Many theatre parties were formed, and the boxes were always crowded. The actors predicted that the play would run through the season. Several of them, among them Miss Gordon herself, took a great interest in the "swagger people" who were discerned every night in front. They would gather at the side of the curtain and at the peep-holes. Gordon, who was an authority on New York society, usually discovered and pointed out the celebrities; after relating their histories, always more or less scandalous, she would sweep on the stage and act superbly. To Evelyn she was a continual source of wonder. Evelyn often stood in the wings trying vainly to catch the secret of the actress's power; it was a power that never lost its sincerity, that never failed to move. On one of these occasions, just after making an exit. Miss Gordon met Evelyn in the wings.

"Oh, I've some news for you, dear. My divorce is going to be granted next week." When Evelyn had offered congratulations, Miss Gordon went on: "Yes, Judge Cowdrey says he's sure it'll be all right. I shall be free again," she cried, throwing up her arms and walking dramatically down the corridor. "Free, free!"



One afternoon at the *matinée*, Evelyn met Leonard Thayer as he was leaving the theatre.

"How fortunate," he said. "I'll walk home with

you."

Evelyn laughed. "To Seventy-first Street? Then you'll have to stay for dinner and sit in Miss Guernsey's place. Madge is dining down-town. Mrs. Barton will be glad to have you."

"I lived up in your neighbourhood once," said Thayer, as they walked slowly toward the elevated station. "That was several years ago. I had a falling out with my Mater, and I took an apartment all by myself. It was just after I left college, and the Mater and I didn't quite understand each other. She was disappointed in me."

"Disappointed?"

"Yes, she wished me to go in for the law. My father made a reputation as a lawyer, and she was awfully proud of him; so she wanted me to follow in his footsteps and all that. When I left Harvard she sent me to Europe for a year. She thought that would cure me of some of my ideas about the ideal life that I got there."

"What were they?" Evelyn asked.

"Oh, I wanted to go in for philanthropy and literature and a lot of other things at the same time," he laughed. "The Mater didn't object to the philanthropy as a kind of side issue, you know. She's philanthropic herself, for that matter; she's always helping people. But she did object to the literature."

"How curious!"

"Oh, I don't know. I think she fancied it was a kind of excuse for being lazy. Sometimes it is. It was while I was in Germany, you know, I wrote

- 'Myrna,' and when I got back I had the literary fever worse than ever."-
 - "But your mother must have liked 'Myrna."
- "Oh, she said it was pretty. She always pretends to laugh at my things. It's her way. But 'Myrna' didn't go at first. In fact, I didn't really catch on till 'Social Parasites' appeared. That was my first real book."

"Perhaps you'll tell me now why you changed your style," Evelyn asked.

- "I should think you could imagine from what I told you," he went on. "'Myrna' I wrote during my year in Germany. It was my first acquaintance with Europe, and the traditions of the places I visited made me poetic."
- "And was that all?" Evelyn asked, shrewdly. "Was it just the scenery and the associations of Europe that made you romantic?"
 - "You think I fell in love, don't you?"
 - "Perhaps."
- "Well, I did. I had a delightful love-affair with a little German girl. It wasn't serious, you know. It was just one of those ideal experiences that only a boy of twenty-two or so can have; and then he never has one again. She married a stout beer-drinking officer."

"How sad!" she said, mockingly.

"Yes, wasn't it? But I forgave her, and sent her my blessing. That episode lent a kind of dim religious colouring to my life — for awhile. It was very touching. For several weeks I travelled about imagining myself a young Byron, and as I went from place to place in Switzerland, I wrote my story. Then I came back to New York and I quarrelled



with the Mater. That made me blue for a long time. The Mater and I had been good friends, good comrades, ever since my father died. I was sixteen then. Then, too, the ugliness of American life sickened me, especially the ugliness of New York. Yet before I left America I thought there couldn't be a more beautiful place in the world."

"But you've got over that?"

"Oh, yes. I adjusted myself to things again. But it had a paralysing effect for a long time. I loafed for six months, and I went off with the Mater to Newport. You see, we tried to be good friends, just the same. That's the worst kind of a quarrel—where you pretend it's all made up and all right. And then down in Newport I flirted desperately."

"Ah, I see. That explains it."

"I knew you'd think that. So it does in a way. I was caught on the rebound. But I woke up in time. I found that my ideal Number Two was utterly heartless. Then I went back to New York, wrote 'Social Parasites,' and —"

"Made your success."

He laughed. "Oh, I don't know about that. My Newport friends were furious. You know the three swells I put into it are the worst characters in the book."

"Yes, they certainly are. I wondered at the time if you were just to them. It seemed to me so strange that people with so — with so many advantages should profit so little by them."

"So many disadvantages, it seems to me. I wonder they're not worse. Our society is so hideous that it's strange to me the people in it can be as good as they are. It's the rich people, not the poor,

And the

that are the worst sufferers in life. strangest part of it is that they never suspect it. Until they do there's no help for them. Now there is my mother. Ever since I got adjusted again to American life, I've wondered how she could be so good as she is. 'Social Parasites' taught me a lot of things — more than it teaches any one else, I'm afraid. Now the Mater has spent her whole life in society; it's part of her being, and she believes in it and its foolish regulations as fervidly as if it were her religion, more fervidly, for that matter. But in spite of it, she's kept herself good and kind and sincere. She's the best mother a man ever had. Of course, she has her prejudices. I never knew any one that had so many social prejudices. But when these run up against her heart - why, the heart wins every time."

"Then you've made up your misunderstanding?" Evelyn ventured to ask.

"Yes — after the Newport summer. It was the girl that did it. I've been grateful to that girl ever since. No, not ever since — just lately. took me some time to get over it." He began to "It's pretty hard for us to recognise our blessings sometimes, isn't it?" he asked, suddenly, looking down at Evelyn. "The Mater, she thought my life was blighted," he went on. "It seems very funny now, when I think of it. I never told her a word, and yet I'm convinced she knew all about it. Every one did, for that matter; the girl took care of that when her engagement was announced. He's dead now, and she's got all his money. The Mater treated me as if I'd been a sick child. She even



gave up all thought of the law, and she stopped kicking against literature."

"She's probably very proud of you now."

"Of course she is. She'd be proud anyway, whether I did anything or not."

"And did she object to your writing for the

stage?"

"Oh, no, not at all. I think she rather liked that. You know, she isn't very consistent. That's one of her most beautiful qualities. I told you she'd cut her Europe short to see the piece."

"I remember," Evelyn replied, quietly. She thought of the large florid woman as she had appeared in the box that night. Mrs. Thayer had a superabundance of mature beauty, an air of being perfectly at ease, of mastery over the situation, a quizzical look in the eyes, and a veiled determination in the smiling mouth.

When they had taken seats in the elevated train, Thayer lapsed into silence. To start him talking again, Evelyn asked, "Is she here now, your mother?"

"No," he replied. "She's gone back. Some friends of ours are going to spend the winter in Florence, and they persuaded her to go. If she were here, I should ask her to call on you."

XXXVII.

On the way up-town, in the intervals of her talk with the dramatist, Evelyn tormented herself with the question whether she ought to have asked Leonard Thayer to dinner. Would he think her invitation rather forward? Then she reflected that she and Madge had already taken dinner with him at that Bohemian restaurant, and she felt somewhat comforted. She envied those people who knew just what to do and just what not to do, and who never acted on impulse. He had not shown surprise on receiving the invitation; but, even if he had felt surprise, he would have concealed it. When they reached the house, if he had said he was sorry but he just thought of an engagement, she would have been relieved. But he followed her with an air of unconsciousness of his surroundings, apparently absorbed in talk as they walked up the stairs. apologised for the absence of an elevator, nervously reflecting that Mrs. Barton might not be prepared to minister to this guest. However, Mrs. Barton's dinners were usually good enough for any one. After all, the old lady was a great comfort. Evelyn felt at this moment completely repaid for the impulse in Twenty-third Street that had brought the actress to the apartment.

Charity received them at the door and conducted



Thayer into the drawing-room. Evelyn went back to the kitchen, where she found Mrs. Barton in a big apron, cooking a steak. When she told of her guest, Mrs. Barton exclaimed, "My God!"

"Now tell me what you were going to have?" Evelyn asked, forcing herself to be patient, and

trying not to appear excited.

"Well, now — there's this steak. There's plenty for three," the old woman explained, "an' you know I ain't no hand at eating meat. In fact, I'd much rather go without it."

"Nonsense," said Evelyn, laughing. "It looks like a good big piece. There'll be plenty for all

of us."

"Now, I did think of smothering it in onions," Mrs. Barton went on, ruefully.

"Well, I am glad you didn't!" Evelyn exclaimed. "Do you want me to be discharged from the company?"

"Well, I've never seen a man that didn't like steak with onions. Now, there was my husband —

he'd — "

"Oh, you dear old thing," Evelyn broke out, while Charity looked dumbly on, "the steak will burn if you don't watch it."

Mrs. Barton gave the gridiron a quick turn in time to prevent disaster.

"Have you any soup?" Evelyn asked.

"Well, I hadn't intended to put any on the table," Mrs. Barton replied, and before she could go on, Charity broke in:

"Oh, yes, missy, they's plenty of soup in the closet. They's some of that tomato bisque that I made yesterday for you expressly. There's enough

left over for five people. I knew it would keep, missy, an' so I made a lot of it."

"I'm afraid you're very extravagant, Charity," said Evelyn, with an amused glance at Mrs. Barton. "But you've saved our lives. Now let us see; to-mato bisque soup, steak."

"Pertaters hashed brown, missy," Charity added.

"You always likes 'em that way."

"Good!" Evelyn exclaimed, beginning to feel happy again.

"And some of those French peas," Mrs. Barton

cried, resigning the steak to Charity.

"Canned!" said Evelyn, with one finger held

dubiously at her lips.

"Well, I'd like to know how you're goin' to git 'em any other way, honey, this time o' year," Charity remonstrated.

"Well, we'd better have them. Of course, we must have them. They're just right. And now for the salad."

Charity chuckled, "Well, I guess you'd better leave the salad to me, missy. Ah'll make the finest salad you ever eat. Jest see ef I don't. An', of co'se, you want some black coffee for the young gen'leman. I guess you ain't never teched my black coffee, honey. Miss Livingstone used ter say they wasn't ever any one lahk me fer black coffee."

"I'll break my rule and take some to-night. Oh, Charity, you're an angel!" Evelyn exclaimed, fer-

vently.

"Well, honey, you always seem to me kind of a beautiful sperrit yo'self," Charity remarked, with a chuckle. "Well, then, I think I'd better go back to our guest," said Evelyn, starting for the door.

"But, darling, you've forgotten the dessert," Mrs.

Barton interposed.

"Oh!" Evelyn looked distressed again, "We're

so used to going without any, I-"

"Well, there's one thing about gen'lemen," said Charity, "that I've observed a thousand times. They ain't got no use for sweet things."

"I could run out and order some ice-cream,"

Mrs. Barton volunteered.

"No, dear," said Evelyn, shaking her head,

"suppose we let the dessert go."

"It won't take me five minutes," Mrs. Barton cried, eagerly, beginning to until her apron; but Evelyn persisted in her refusal. "Charity will have to make the dinner so good that Mr. Thayer won't realise we haven't had any dessert."

"Well, missy, Charity'll do her best," the old

negress responded.

A few moments later, Evelyn astonished herself by telling Leonard Thayer all about her arrangements for the dinner, referring even to the omission of the ice-cream. He laughed and said she was giving him just the kind of dinner he ordered when he dined at the club, and he professed a deep interest in her housekeeping. He grieved over Madge's absence, and he made joking references to the impression Madge had made on his friend Mills. Then he looked over the apartment, expressing delight with the heavy furniture and the old-fashioned pictures. When Evelyn spoke of the Livingstones, he looked surprised.

"Livingstone, Livingstone?" he said, with his

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head in the air. Then he added, "Well, by Jove! Is that the girl? Why, I know her. She nearly hounded me to death trying to persuade me to engage her for Mathilde. She came to my house three times."

When Evelyn told what she knew of the girl's history, his face grew serious. "It seemed to me at the time there was something tragic about her, as if she had been disappointed or something like that."

He asked where she was, and whether she knew the name of the company she was travelling with.

"Some one told Madge that they were playing one-night stands chiefly," said Evelyn.

"One-night stands!" he repeated, blankly. "A fine creature like that. What a life! How does she stand it?" For several moments they sat in silence. Then he asked, "I suppose you have been

"Oh, no," Evelyn replied, "we had six continuous weeks of one-night stands last season."

"It must have been ghastly."

spared those hardships?"

"It wasn't very pleasant," Evelyn acknowledged, with a deprecatory smile.

"But how did you stand it? Didn't it pull you down?"

"No. Because when we were travelling I was sleeping. Life consisted of sleeping, travelling, and acting. After a time I was able to sleep on the trains. I often didn't know even the names of the towns where we played."

He looked at her sympathetically. "I think that you are a very brave woman," he said, with quiet earnestness.



"Then there are hundreds of brave women," she replied, smiling, "who go through that experience year after year. Some companies, you know, play one-night stands from one end of the season to the other."

He sighed heavily. "I'm learning new things about the theatrical profession every day. I used to think I knew it all."

"Do you think there's very much to know?" she asked, quietly.

"Well, there's a good deal in getting the right point of view, understanding the conditions. Now I used to look upon actors as rather lazy, rather idle people. You make me think that they are the hardest-worked people in the world."

"Sometimes the work is easy and pleasant," said Evelyn, "and sometimes it is the most horrible drudgery."

"When is it easy?" he asked, with a quizzical smile.

"My work now is. I sometimes feel as if I weren't earning my salary."

"Oho!"

"You help to make it easy — that is, your play does. It's a pleasure for an actor to take a part in a piece so — well, so intelligent as yours — where the situations are so human and the lines are so natural and — well, so easy to say."

Thayer bowed extravagantly. "Thank you," he said, flushing with what she perceived to be genuine pleasure.

"Now last year and the year before," Evelyn went on, "I played in a piece where the lines and the situations were so absurd it seemed at times as if I couldn't go through my part. When I reached the stage door, I often felt like turning back and never entering a theatre again."

Something in the remark made Thayer silent for a long time. "I suppose that every one who has to work at certain times feels like that," he said. "I know I do. If I didn't force myself to write every morning, I believe I never should get anything done."

"Don't you ever want to write?" Evelyn asked,

astonished, and Thayer promptly replied:

"Never; I always go to my desk with loathing and pitying myself because I have to be there."

"But you don't have to do it," Evelyn protested.

- "I have to keep a compact with myself. That's the point. For the first ten minutes I sit there, the most miserable and helpless being on earth. Then my mind begins to work, and I make a start. When once the start is made, the rest is usually easy." He smiled at the look of astonishment in her face. "I see you are disappointed," he went on.
- "No, it seems all the more creditable, your doing that, when it must be so hard."
- "Oh, I didn't mean to throw flowers at myself," he exclaimed, with a roar of laughter.
- "And you always seem so cheerful," Evelyn went on.
- "Except when I'm working. Then I'm well, if you could know what the servants who have interrupted me would say!"
- "Everything's hard, isn't it?" she said, thinking of Oswald Webb. She thought she knew now why he had not done more with his talent. It was be-



cause he lacked the force that drove Leonard Thayer to his task every day, no matter what his mood might be.

"Everything worth while," he agreed.

"But don't you," Evelyn continued, returning to the subject of Thayer's work, "don't you ever have what people call inspiration?"

He shook his head sadly. "It's shocking, and I should hate to have it known. But I honestly believe I have never had an inspiration in my life."

Mrs. Barton presently entered, wearing in place of her old house-dress and apron a blue and white frock which suited her pretty grandmotherliness. Her placid face gave no evidence of the agitating preparations she had been making for the dinner. When Evelyn presented Leonard Thayer, he greeted her with enthusiasm.

"You don't know me, but I know you," he said. "You've given me many a pleasant hour."

"Well, that's very kind of you to say so," said Mrs. Barton, her face shining with pleasure.

"I have at least a dozen of your photographs," Thayer went on. "As the nurse in 'Romeo and Juliet'—"

"Oh, that was a very pleasant engagement," Mrs. Barton interrupted. "It was when Miss Frances Howard played Juliet for a hundred nights at Sedley's Theatre. What houses we did have! And such nice people in the company!"

"And then I have you as Claude Melnotte's mother."

Mrs. Barton began to laugh. "That was when I was with that terrible Arthur Littleton. Dear me, how I suffered from that man! I never cared much

for the part, anyway; it always seemed a silly play to me, even at first when it was so popular. But Littleton!" Mrs. Barton threw up both hands. "He was a dreadful man to get on with. Still he's dead now, poor man!" she added, as if this fact in some way excused him.

"And then your Mrs. Candour," cried Thayer. "I've always said you were the best Mrs. Candour on the stage. I can't endure any other Mrs. Candour."

Mrs. Barton became so happy that she broke into reminiscence. She rarely met any one so interested in the theatre as this young man, and she gave him confidences that only his sympathy and enthusiasm could have drawn from her. At the dinner-table the talk was so lively that Evelyn forgot to worry about the food. A few minutes after they sat down she realised that she had forgotten to speak of the claret, and on the instant Charity entered the room, with a large bottle. Leonard Thayer smiled at Charity and praised the salad in her presence, which made the old negress chuckle with delight. When coffee was reached, he and Mrs. Barton had become, as he said, "friends for life." He declared that when he wrote another play, he'd introduce a fat part for her.

"Well. if you do, it'll be an act of mercy," said Mrs. Barton. "We poor old heavy women aren't thought of by the dramatists nowadays. All they care for is youth, good looks, and pretty dresses."

Mrs. Barton stood at the door when Evelyn and Thayer started for the theatre. Thayer noticed that, in spite of the cheeriness of her smile, her eyes were full of tears. When they had reached the



street, he said, "What's the matter with the old lady? Isn't she happy?"

"She is always like that when she sees me go away at night," Evelyn explained. "It makes her feel badly because she isn't going, too."

"Ah!" said Thayer, and for several moments he did not speak again. Then he looked at her quickly. "Isn't it wonderful how they all love it?"

Evelyn nodded. "But poor Mrs. Barton needs the money, too."

"Would it make you unhappy if you were to give it up?" he asked, as they neared the station.

"That would depend," Evelyn replied, looking straight ahead and feeling uncomfortable.

"On what?"

Evelyn smiled faintly. "On practical considerations."

"Ah!" he said, in a tone of amusement. "Not because you care so much for the life?"

"Oh, no, not for the life," she replied, quickly, and then she felt uncomfortable again. "Perhaps if I were a really good actress I should feel differently."

He did not challenge the remark, for at that moment he was climbing the steep steps leading to the train. When they had reached this platform, he looked curiously at the people standing there as if seeking for other actors on their way to their evening's task. "I really must see if I can't get something for Mrs. Barton," he said, absently.

At the stage door Evelyn bade him good night. "I suppose you aren't going to be in front, are you?" she said, and he shook his head. "But I may come around at the back during the evening," he ex-

plained, and he took himself off, without referring, as she had expected him to do, to his enjoyment of the dinner. But she entered the theatre feeling happier than if he had spoken the perfunctory words. Madge had already arrived, and was standing near her dressing-room reading a letter under a gas-jet. When Evelyn told Madge of her guest, the soubrette pretended to be indignant that Thayer had been invited to dine while she was away from home. "Oh, it's all very well to say you asked him on the spur of the moment!" she exclaimed, satirically.

After the second act Thaver met Madge in the wings, and professed great delight on being accused of consenting to dine in the little apartment only when she was absent. He declared that in order to give him a chance to prove his innocence she must ask him to come again. She refused, however, saying that she wouldn't give him a chance to slight her a second time, and making him laugh aloud by declaring that she'd keep him informed of her future absences so that he might go on avoiding her.

"There's only one thing you can do to make everything all right," she said, and when he asked for further enlightenment, she added, "Write a big part for me in your next play."

"Why, that's exactly what I've promised to do

for Mrs. Barton," he exclaimed.

"Oh, she's been making up to you, has she? Well, I'll tell her what I think of *her*, when I get home."

Madge ran down the corridor and went into Evelyn's dressing-room. "Say, I've got a great idea!" She looked about quickly to make sure that



Evelyn was alone. "Why don't you get Thayer to write a play for you?".

"Oh, you foolish girl!" Evelyn said, touching her hair with a brush and studying her make-up in the blaze of electric light that came from the bulbs around the mirror.

"Now look here. Don't you be a big chump. Here's the chance of your life. They say everybody has one chance, if they only had sense enough to see it when it was coming. Now he thinks you're simply great as Mathilde. You needn't pretend that he doesn't. That way of yours of running yourself down makes me sick. I don't see how you ever got a job in this business. Well, now, I tell you. Get him to write a play around some other nice sweet girl like Mathilde. Only have him make her more cheerful, don't you know, and let things go more her way. The successful kind of girl, I mean. And, of course, a society girl. That always catches 'em. Besides, it'll give you a chance to wear a lot of stunning clothes. Oh, say!" Madge paused and surveyed Evelyn with deep earnestness. "I think you're the biggest fool not to work the society racket. It would help a lot with a girl like you. Think of all it's done for Amy Leeds. Why, she'd never be anywhere if she didn't have a lot of swell friends. That's what Nat Howard starred her for, and think of all the money she's making."

"Oh, Madge," said Evelyn, listlessly, "I don't

see how you can talk such nonsense."

"It ain't nonsense. It's simply playing your cards right."

"I'm not clever enough to star, I mean."

"But you don't have to be clever nowadays,"

Madge insisted, irritably. "All you need is the chance and plenty of advertising. Now, Thayer will give you the chance, and, if the play is boomed right, and you're boomed right, too, why, your fortune's made. They say that Amy Leeds made forty thousand dollars last year for herself, mind you, for herself," Madge concluded, in shrill soprano.

Evelyn shook her head, refusing to formulate any arguments.

"If you haven't sense enough to work that little racket for yourself, why, I believe I'll do it for vou."

Evelyn looked up, startled.

"What do you mean, Madge?"

"Why, I'll give Thayer a little hint," she explained, with a malicious smile.

"Yes, you'd bet-Evelyn turned her head away. ter," she said, warningly.

"Honest. I mean it."

"Oh, Madge!" said Evelyn, with impatience. "Well, ta, ta," said the girl, starting for the door, "I'll wait till the great author and I get to be better friends. Perhaps I'll ask him to write the play for me."

Evelyn dismissed the matter from her mind, as she did most of her talk with Madge. That child was always suggesting schemes; she said that if she were only a man she'd keep a dozen enterprises going at once; she couldn't understand how the young fellows in the company could be satisfied with the lazy lives they led; she often wished that she had money enough to start some business that would keep her busy during the day. She envied that clever girl who conducted a collar and cuff business



in Newark, and acted in New York at the same time. For a few days she said little to Evelyn about Leonard Thayer; but during the next few weeks she noticed that the author came behind the scenes much oftener than he had done before. Most authors, she had observed, appeared regularly at the theatre during the earlier weeks of productions, and then came only occasionally or not at all. Leonard Thayer frequently accompanied Evelyn and Madge to the elevated station, and would have gone as far as the flat if Evelyn had not refused to let him take the trouble.

One evening, as Madge was chatting with Thayer at the back of the stage, she said, carelessly, "I met Amy Leeds on the street to-day. Isn't she pretty?"

Thayer nodded. "She is a pretty girl," he said,

carelessly.

"Do you know," Madge went on, "I think she's a good deal like Evelyn — Evelyn Johnson, I mean," she innocently explained. "Not that their faces are alike. Evelyn's face is just as pretty, and has a good deal more character. But they're a good deal alike in style. I don't know just what it is — but it's something about them."

"Simple, you mean, don't you?" Thayer asked.

"Yes, that's it — simplicity. Though with Amy Leeds, goodness, I don't think she's very simple on the stage. She seems to me awfully affected. But ain't it wonderful the success she's made? And she hasn't half the talent Evelyn has. The way they boom people now! Honestly, I believe that if Evelyn had the chances that girl's had she'd be

just as successful — more successful," Madge added, valiantly, "because she's so much better."

If Leonard Thayer divined what Madge was driving at, he did not betray himself even to her sharp eyes. "There's everything in getting just the right combination," he said, non-committally.

"Oh, yes, you have to be trained," Madge went on, thinking of her talk with Evelyn, "and getting the right kind of a play." She kept her eyes turned from Thayer. She waited alertly for him to speak.

"Plays are very dubious things, Miss Guernsey," said Thayer, and for an instant she suspected that he was drawing her out. But now that she had begun she must go on. Oh, if Evelyn knew what she was doing she'd kill her! Suddenly she felt her courage failing. Perhaps it would be better not to say any more just now. A hint might be—

"It's odd, your speaking about that," said Thayer, in the light voice and clear diction that made him at moments seem to Madge slightly effeminate. "But I've had a sort of half-formulated notion like that in my mind for several weeks."

"About Evelyn?" Madge asked, tremulously.

"About Miss Johnson — yes," and in her joy Madge forgave what she might under other circumstances have regarded as a rebuke. She had an impulse to rush down to Evelyn's dressing-room. It quickly gave way to another impulse.

"Oh, for goodness' sake, don't ever tell her that

I spoke about it."

"Why not?" Thayer asked, with a smile that again made her suspect he had divined her motives.

"Oh, because — well, because she's the queerest thing, that's all. And she's always scolding me for



being so — well, for talking too much. Now I must go and dress for the next act. But I think the idea is great, don't you?" she concluded, hurrying away.

For a week Madge waited, hoping that Evelyn would make some reference to a result of her talk with Thayer. As she heard nothing, she again began to be resentful. She said to herself that the only thing she disliked about Evelyn was her habit of being so terribly secretive. Then she felt remorseful, and decided that Thayer had not spoken to Evelyn about the play. Well, she had done all she could. But in this consideration there was poor comfort, and it was especially hard not to be able even to mention the subject.

XXXVIII.

Now that the New York success of "Deception" was assured, the management announced a professional matinée so that the actors in town might see it. The house was crowded, and all the performers did their best, with the exception of Harry Davidson, who made an effort to show how indifferent he could be, and whose slovenly acting was received with rapturous admiration. After Davidson, Miss Gordon won the greatest success; she was exhilarated by the opportunity of displaying her talent before her fellow players. Evelyn, probably on account of the fatigue and excitement of the day before, felt nervous; but Mrs. Barton, who was in the audience, afterwards told her that she had done surprisingly well.

At any rate, she received an offer the next day from Jason James, manager of the Gotham Theatre, to play leading business in a new piece, "The Giant's Cave," that he was about to send out on the road. The offer pleased her, though she had to reply at once that she was under contract for the run of "Deception." She had never before had the satisfaction of declining so good a chance. She showed the manager's letter to Madge, who remarked, with a significant smile, "Well, I guess things are coming your way all right."

That night, on meeting Leonard Thayer in the wings, Madge at once communicated the good news. "You'd better hurry up and write that play for Evelyn," she said, warningly. "If you don't, some one else will be trying to get her. What's been the matter, anyway?" she asked, feeling that now she could take a much bolder tone with him. She guessed that after a little while those people who thought Evelyn never would do much on the stage would feel pretty cheap. In her happiness in her friend's success, Madge forgot that she had herself been one of the doubters.

"You mustn't think I've forgotten about that project," said Thayer, good-humouredly. He placed his hand on the back of his head. "It's still here."

Madge threw forward her elbow, letting the tips of her fingers rest on her forehead. "Well, can't you let it work out here?" she said, with burlesque seriousness.

"I have a feeling that it is working in that direction, Miss Guernsey," Thayer replied, and they both laughed.

"I've been doing a good deal of worrying about you," Madge remarked, starting away.

"Oh, Miss Guernsey," he called after her.

"Well?" she said, hesitating.

"I'm glad you spoke about that little matter. I know James, and I happen to know there's an old woman's part in that piece. I'll tackle him tomorrow for Mrs. Barton."

"Oh, you — you angel!" Madge exclaimed, kissing both hands to him.

"Perhaps you'd better not say anything to Miss

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Johnson or Mrs. Barton, either, till I know whether the part is filled."

"All right," Madge agreed.

The next afternoon Mrs. Barton received a note sent from Jason James by a messenger, offering her the engagement. After reading it, she burst into tears. Both Evelyn and Madge happened to be at home at the time, and rejoiced in the good news.

"But I'm sorry we're going to lose you," said Evelyn, and Mrs. Barton's tears began to flow faster.

"Oh, you can get along without me, darling," she said. "I've known all along you didn't really need me. But I was only too glad of the chance to stay."

Both Evelyn and Madge protested that they had needed her, and that when she returned she must come back to the apartment, provided that, of course, they were still in town. When Madge explained how the engagement had been secured, Mrs. Barton at once wrote Leonard Thayer a letter of appreciation. "I'll send him one of my first photographs," she said to Evelyn, "the one as Celia, that I had taken years ago, before I went into old parts. Perhaps that'll please him. He can add it to his collection."

After her second talk with Leonard Thayer concerning his writing a play for Evelyn, Madge Guernsey expected soon to hear that he had made a start. But for more than a week, though she saw Thayer several times, he did not refer to the piece. She felt disgusted; those literary men must be awfully lazy. Still, she consoled herself, there was a chance that Thayer might be preparing some-



thing in secret; she had heard that writers often felt superstitious about discussing their work while they were doing it. If Thayer did write a play for Evelyn, of course, she reflected, he would have to provide a good part for her.

For several nights the author did not appear at the theatre, and Madge wondered if his absence could mean that he was hard at work. She remembered his saying that he had the habit of writing in the morning. When, finally, she met him in the wings, she at once asked him what he had been doing with himself.

"Will you promise not to tell?" he asked, smiling knowingly into her face.

Madge looked at him with deep injury in her "As if I ever told anything!"

"Well, I've been blocking out a new comedy."

Madge clasped her hands. "For Evelyn?"

"Well, perhaps," he replied, conservatively.

"Oh, you dear!" she exclaimed, and she made a movement as if to kiss him. Then she checked herself. "I'm so afraid of you I shouldn't dare."

"I'm disappointed," he said, laughing.

"Well, aren't you going to tell me about it?"

"You'll be disappointed, too. It's farcical."

"Oh!" Madge exclaimed, her face growing serious.

"But not too farcical, you know," he went on, whimsically. "Ever since this piece caught on, they've been urging me to do something cheerful. They say that's the surest way of making big money. You see, I'm growing commercial."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Madge, with practical decision. "I'm commercial myself. Make all the

money you can, that's what I believe. But Evelyn never can do farce. Never in the world," Madge concluded, hopelessly.

"Ah, but her part will be the least farcical of

all. It will be light comedy."

"Society?" Madge asked, acutely. "Real, swagger people? New York?"

Thayer nodded, his eyes shining with amusement. "It's about a New York girl, very rich and important, who takes it into her head to go on the

stage."

"Ah!" said Madge, in a long sigh. "I see what you're going to do. The actors in the piece will be the farcical people. Now I know what you've been watching us for. They'll simply hate you."

At that moment Evelyn came forward in her costume for the third act. "What has Madge been saying?" she asked.

Thayer appealed to Madge. "Shall I tell her? Now, I'm going to see if you can keep a secret."

"Oh, for goodness' sake, don't make a secret of anything so important as that. I think it would be awful not to tell her. He's—" Madge clapped her hand over her mouth.

"It's just a little confidence between Miss Guernsey and me," Thayer explained.

"About you," Madge added.

Evelyn flushed beneath her make-up.

"Oh, do tell her," Madge whispered.

"Now this is a hold-up," Thayer protested, laughing.

"Of course, if you don't want to tell me," said Evelyn, catching up her dress and starting to walk away.



"I'll tell you after the performance," Thayer remarked, to tease Madge.

He had no chance to say more, for Evelyn was walking to her place on the stage, and he did not see her again until she had dressed for the street. He met her as she was walking with Madge down the corridor. When he found that Madge had kept her word, he gave her an approving nod. Then he told Evelyn of his plans. She listened without comment, her face growing a shade paler, while they walked toward the elevated station. He was outlining the situation to her as they climbed the steep steps, and they were all so absorbed that they did not stop to discuss whether he should go uptown. They had reached Fiftieth Street before he had finished his outline.

"Oh, it's splendid. But I never could do Alice Hastings, never," said Evelyn.

"There! I knew you'd say that," Madge exclaimed, with disgust in her tone.

"I couldn't sustain that emotional scene in the second act, and I never could do that wild dance at the close of the third act."

"Oh, I guess we could manage all that," said Thayer, lightly.

"You'll have to be coached for the dance, of course," Madge remarked, with decision. "And it will be dreadfully hard to do it right, to put just the right snap into it. Why, they say that Amy Leeds was coached in every bit of business that she does in her new piece, and she had to be taught how to say a lot of those hard speeches, too. I only wish I had the chance."

"You'd better write the part for Miss Guernsey," said Evelyn, smiling at the dramatist.

Madge shook her head. "Jenny Ballou is the part for me. She is just my style. I guess I know where you got *her*," Madge exclaimed, with a pout. "I can see she's just your idea of a tomboy of an actress, ain't she?" she went on, addressing Thayer.

"Well, I intend to try to make her one of the

most lovable characters in the piece."

"Oh, I know," Madge remarked, with the air of refusing to be won over by flattery. "She is the kind people like to laugh at and guy and all that. But she ain't the kind they respect very much. But never mind. I'll be mighty glad to play her, if I get the chance."

"Well, you shall have the part if you want it," said Thayer, and Madge looked at him with a radiance that again conveyed a desire to embrace him. Then the dramatist turned to Evelyn. "You really think the scheme is worth working out?"

Evelyn waited for a few moments before replying. "It won't be as fine a play as 'Deception,'" she said, "or as strong. But it ought to be even more popular."

Madge held up the finger of prophecy. "You may make twenty thousand a year!" she said to Evelyn.

They did not discuss the play again for several days. Then, one night at the theatre, Thayer mentioned to Evelyn that he had struck a hard place. "She's rebelled against me," he explained.

"Who has?" Evelyn asked.

"Alice Hastings. I'm trying to make her act in one way, and she refuses. What shall I do?"



"Let her alone for awhile," Evelyn replied, promptly. "Then perhaps she'll come round."

"But suppose she doesn't?"

"Then give her her own way."

"And spoil the scene?" he asked.

"If you don't, *she'll* spoil the scene," Evelyn insisted. "I've played scenes like that where I could feel that the character I was playing was doing things simply because the dramatist made her do them, not because it was natural and right that she should do them. I always feel uneasy in them, and they never go right."

Thayer looked at her for a long time. Then he sighed heavily. "You are right," he said, and he added, with a smile, "You are always right."

"Indeed, I am not," Evelyn contradicted. "I

wish I were. Don't trust my judgment."

Thayer bowed with exaggerated respect. "Your instinct in these matters is always true. I never talk my work over with you without getting some practical help."

She did not see him again for several days; but she received a note from him saying that he had gone into the country where he could work quietly. One evening he appeared again in the theatre. She met him as she was leaving the stage after the first act.

"Well, I've done it," he said. "I've given Alice her own way. She made me."

"I hope you won't be sorry," Evelyn replied.

He shook his head dubiously. "It's better for the piece," he went on, "but it weakens the part."

"Oh!" she said, in a tone of disappointment that he at once observed.

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- "Do you think I've made a mistake?" he asked, anxiously.
- "That was just a little selfish feeling," she confessed. "I believe you've done right. So many plays are spoiled because one part is developed out of proportion to the rest."

"But they won't like it," he went on, nodding in

the direction of the manager's office.

"Don't you think you've reached the place now where you can do what you please?" Evelyn asked, and he covered his mouth with one hand.

"That's treason. If you don't look out they'll say my work is like Ibsen. Then I'll never have another play produced."

"I don't believe I should care what they said

as long as I felt I had done the best I could."

He laughed and told her that those were noble sentiments. "I'll try to live up to them if you'll stand by me."

"But I have no influence."

"You haven't? The prospective star?" he exclaimed, and he noticed with surprise that she could not meet his glance.

"I am not strong enough to be a star," she said, shaking her head. "If you want your play to succeed you'd better get some one else to take the part."

Leonard Thayer frequently called for Evelyn in the afternoon, and together they walked to places of interest in the city. From nine o'clock till twelve in the morning he devoted himself to work; during the rest of the day he was free to roam and to study and read. He confessed to Evelyn that he had no social conscience, and when his mother was out of the city he saw very little of people. Several of



their excursions were taken in the East Side, which Thayer's imagination made wonderfully picturesque. "The know-it-all literary critics say that there is no romance in New York," he remarked to her one day as they crossed the Bowery. "Why, the place is full of it." On another occasion, as they were walking along Rivington Street, he said: "When I first came back from Europe I used to prowl along these places because they reminded me just a little of some of the musty old cities on the Continent. If it hadn't been for this and for the sake of the Mater, too, of course, I think I should have pulled up sticks, and become one of those gloomy expatriated Americans that you see over there."

"You are beginning to make me almost like New York," she said.

"Oh, of course you'll like it. You'll love it by and by. But I don't see how people who know only what they call the 'nice side' of New York life ever can like it. It is so terribly prosaic, in spite of all the interesting things that are happening. What could be more stupefying than the blocks upon blocks of brownstone houses up-town?"

"When I first came to New York I couldn't believe that there was any home life here," Evelyn said, and then she felt conscious, as she often did, in Leonard Thayer's presence, of having made a very stupid and provincial remark.

He laughed and replied, apparently taking her remark seriously, "But there really is plenty of it—the real old article, as real as the kind they have in New England, only—only less strenuous." After a brief silence, he went on: "I should think that all novelists would want to come here. There's so

much material, so much life of all kinds, and such a fine background! But most of them," he went on with a sigh, "prefer to write about things thousands of miles away. When I was in Cambridge I thought that all life had been put into books. Haven't you ever heard about the undergraduate who said he disliked the country; he preferred reading about Nature? So many writers I know are just like that, though they don't know it. They've spoiled themselves by reading too much. The deeper they go into books the further they get away from life. Now, it always seems to me that Oswald

"But he — his case is different, it's so peculiar," she remonstrated, quietly.

"Yes, I know about it. That is, I know what they say and what I observed myself when I was in Boston. Yet he is the very one that first warned me against too much reading. He pointed out the danger to me when I was in college."

"Did he really?" said Evelyn. Then she won-

dered why she should have been surprised.

Webb is one of these."

"He used to hold himself up to me as a warning," Thayer laughed. "Webb takes himself very seriously, you know. I sometimes think if he took himself less seriously he would have accomplished more. He would have worked harder and bemoaned his lost opportunities less. Don't you think so?"

"Oh, I don't know, I don't know," she replied,

hastily.

"Of course he's a good fellow and all that. There never was a better fellow in the world or a kinder friend. But he always seemed to me to lack—



well — the quality that makes men get there in spite of everything."

Evelyn recalled this conversation many times. Oswald Webb and Leonard Thayer were so different, and yet in many ways they seemed alike. was a buoyancy in Thayer's temperament that Webb lacked. Once she asked herself which was the broader of the two, and she had to acknowledge, almost against her will, that the advantage lay with the younger man. Thayer's interest in life stimulated her own. He often made her appreciate things she had never observed before; his insight into details surprised her, and his sense of beauty made her feel ashamed. In Central Park, where they sometimes walked late in the afternoon, he called her attention to the purple haze in the trees and to the varying tints of the atmosphere, as the winter advanced toward spring, and they would watch the changing lights in the sunset as they shot among the bare boughs. Once she asked him why he so rarely described natural scenery in his stories, and he told her he had tried to describe it and had failed; he never could express what he saw. "And after all," he added, "what people like to read about is other people, with the same interests, and joys, and griefs as their own." A moment later, he went on: "Yet scenery sometimes seems to me more personal than people. I mean in its effects: it tells one thing to one observer and another thing to another. Now, the great charm to me about writing a play is that it appeals to the eye as well as the understanding, and of course a story appeals only to the understanding. That's why plays are so popular; they reach every one, and when a man writes a successful



play he has the satisfaction of knowing that he reaches the heart of the whole public. So many things in novels, you know, are lost on most readers. That used to dishearten me very much at first until Oswald Webb said something about it that I shall never forget."

"What was that?" Evelyn asked.
"I'd written him a letter about it just after 'Social Parasites' appeared. I said people were praising the very things in the story that I didn't like, that I wished I hadn't written, and ignoring the little touches that were to me the most precious of all. He wrote back that nothing was ever really lost in a story: he said that every one of my points would find a response from some reader, if it had truth in it. That was very comforting."

"Yes, readers must be like audiences," Evelyn "Some audiences laugh at speeches remarked. that other audiences take perfectly seriously or miss the point of altogether."

"After all," said Thayer, "every one of us who is trying to do artistic work has just one purpose in mind; so the laws that govern one art must govern the others. And just as art is the same everywhere, so the principles of beauty remain fixed. But the secret of acting, after all, lies in the nature of the artist. If he is sincere, and if his nature is fine enough to perceive and to reflect the truth, then he will do good work. In the more complex arts, like writing and painting, insincerity is often able to hide itself and to delude people. In fact, I sometimes think that there are comparatively few who can unerringly distinguish between what is affected and what is true." He had been looking straight

ahead, and now he suddenly turned to Evelyn and smiled. "I don't often let myself rhapsodise like that. I dare say that I am not very lucid."

"Oh, I think I know what you mean," she replied. "I've thought of it so often in my own work. Acting ought, of course, to be impersonal; that is, we ought to act outside ourselves as much as we can. But what we really do is to give expression to our own natures."

"True, true!" he exclaimed. "And if you don't mind my saying so," he went on, "that's what makes vour own art so delightful."

Evelyn flushed violently. "Ah, but I have no art, really."

"Indeed you have," Thayer insisted, his face growing earnest. "Your acting is so simple, so true — it is — "

Evelyn held up one hand. "Please don't," she urged.

He laughed at her confusion. "I intend to stick to my opinion!" he exclaimed.

XXXIX.

"DECEPTION" continued to be given in New York till the first of March. The critics declared that the run was remarkable, and it proved that a drama depending for its success chiefly on literary merit, on brilliancy of dialogue, could succeed in New York. Evelyn was sorry that her life in the apartment had come to an end; but she did not feel the dread of the road that she had once felt; she and Madge would still live together and keep each other from being homesick.

From New York the company went to Buffalo, and then travelled west. The season was to close with a four weeks' engagement in Boston, beginning about the middle of April. The long New York run made the piece successful on the road, and it was everywhere praised. Evelyn disliked travelling again, but Madge, who was secretly tired of the monotony of life in the apartment, greatly enjoyed Gradually a coldness developed between Madge and Evelyn. Madge resented Evelyn's reticence; it piqued her curiosity and it also puzzled her. She had always maintained that Evelyn was "deep;" now she seemed deeper than she had ever been. Besides, Evelyn had grown quiet and serious again, as she had been during the last six months of her tour the season before. Yet there was apparently



no reason why she should be serious. Her performance was well received by the audiences. papers, too, praised her, and some of them called attention to the improvement over her acting of the year before, which did not altogether please her. Unlike Madge, she found no attraction in the life at the hotels; but she busied herself with reading and with her correspondence. Madge often wondered why Evelyn spent so much time in writing and who received all the letters that she sent away. Oswald Webb continued to forward books to her, and she had to keep him informed of her changes in address. He had not advanced very rapidly on his novel, he wrote, and he was so dissatisfied with what he had done that he would rather not send her any more of it at present. Perhaps by the time she reached Boston he should have finished it, and then she might look it over at her leisure, if she liked.

One night while they were playing in Detroit, Helen Gordon rushed excitedly into Evelyn's dressing-room; she held in her hand a telegram. "At last, at last," she cried, standing in the middle of the room, which Madge had just left to go on the stage, and waving the paper high in the air, "I've got it, I've got it."

"Got what?" Evelyn asked, carefully shading the rouge of her right cheek, and watching Miss

Gordon's image in the mirror.

"Why, the divorce. I expected to get it weeks ago; but that man fought it so. Just let me give you one good hug to relieve my feelings. There! Now, Evelyn Johnson, you're a witness. Just you listen to what I'm going to say. Not if I live to be a hundred, not if I live to be a hundred, will I ever

marry again. There, now, do you hear that? And if I ever do marry," Miss Gordon concluded, opening the door, "why, you can say I've gone raving crazy."

From Detroit the company started on a tour of the smaller cities, in each of which they played for one or two, and occasionally three, nights. Several of the older actors complained bitterly of the hardship, saying that a piece like "Deception," on its first tour, ought to have been given in the big cities only, and speaking scornfully of the Syndicate. The audiences, too, grew smaller, though the business still remained satisfactory. "There's no use sending out a piece like this on 'one-night stands,'" said Madge, one night in Sandusky, as she walked with Evelyn to the theatre, "unless it's got a star with a big name."

Evelyn nodded, walking rapidly to avoid being late. The stage-manager had warned the company to arrive fifteen minutes earlier than the usual time, as they should have to rush the piece in order to make the night train.

"I guess Leonard Thayer will be mad enough when he hears how the receipts are falling off," Madge exclaimed.

Evelyn said nothing. Madge had already observed that Evelyn became strangely reticent whenever the dramatist's name was mentioned.

"I wonder if he's finished the new piece yet?" Madge went on. "It's taking him a mighty long time to write it."

"He's working on the last act," Evelyn remarked, as they turned into the dark alley that led to the theatre.



"Well, you might have told me!"

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"I only heard to-day, Madge. I had a letter from him this morning."

"Is he going to send you the manuscript?" Madge asked, acutely.

"He says he may come out to read it."

Madge stopped, as she was about to push open the door leading to the stage. "Here?" she cried.

"Wherever we are when he finishes the act."

Madge pressed heavily against the door. "While we're on one-night stands!" Then she added: "Well, it will do him a lot of good to see what the theatrical business is really like."

Before the performance had concluded, every one in the company knew that Leonard Thayer was coming out with the manuscript of his new play. The actors were greatly excited; several hoped that the play would contain parts which they could secure; others expressed a fear that Thayer would be dissatisfied with the way "Deception" was presented on the road. "The scenery's getting pretty shabby," said one of them, "and some of us have been falling into some pretty bad tricks. The road don't ever do a performance any good, and one-night stands, where you're thinking of catching trains all the time, are sure to make your work ragged. Johnson's the only one of us that hasn't let down a bit since we started out."

Thayer reached the company at Toledo, where "Deception" was to be given for three nights. Evelyn received his card at her hotel, a few moments after Madge had gone out for a bicycle ride. When she went down to the ugly parlour, with its faded carpet and hangings, she was reminded of her

meeting with him at the boarding-house in Twentythird Street. He hurried forward, extending his hand, his face shining. From the pocket of his coat, she saw a blue-covered manuscript protruding.

"It's good to see you again," he said, looking

into her face.

"It makes me feel as if I were back in New York," Evelyn replied, flushing.

"Well, I suppose that's a compliment."

"It's the greatest compliment an actor can give any one," Evelyn explained.

She sat on the couch near the window, and he drew up a chair. "What a queer place this is!" he said, looking about the room.

"Toledo isn't strong on hotels," Evelyn remarked, with a smile. "But we're here for so short a time it really doesn't matter very seriously."

Thayer frowned. "But can't they do better than this?"

"There is a better hotel. At any rate, it's more expensive and larger. But this is more convenient to the theatre, and it's popular with theatrical people."

Thayer sighed. "Well, I'm more fortunate than

you are. I'm staying at the club."

"Then you aren't going to travel with us?" Evelyn asked, trying to maintain an air purely casual.

"That depends," he replied, mysteriously, and he drew the manuscript from his pocket. He passed it to her with a ceremonious bow.

Evelyn quickly opened the first page of the first act. "How many characters?" she asked, glancing quickly over the list.

"Twenty-three," he promptly replied.



- "Expensive company," she remarked. "Think of all the salaries."
- "Oh, I did think of all that," he lamented. "But I needed them all. It simply couldn't be limited. At first I tried to be economical, and then, to tell the truth, I forgot all about economy."
- "Of course, if they are really important," Evelyn conceded.
- "They fill out the picture. In the third act, the ballroom scene, I had to have a good many people, you know."
- "Perhaps some of them can be cut out on the road," said Evelyn, with a smile. Then she glanted into his face. "Are you going to read it to me?"

Thayer threw up his hands. "I haven't the courage. I should be too conscious when I reached the places that I know aren't right. I want you to read it yourself and tell me what you think."

For a half-hour they talked about the new piece, about Evelyn's experiences since leaving New York, and about the way "Deception" had been received on the road. "I've read all the notices," he said, with a gloomy smile.

"And haven't you been satisfied?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "They've been flattering enough; but they're so incompetent and vulgar, most of them. I wonder where they get their critics."

"Some of them must be the little boys that come to interview us," Evelyn replied. "They are nice boys, but they haven't had many opportunities to learn. Sometimes they come and sit for an hour, expecting me to entertain them. Then they go away

and they either don't write anything at all or they write something that makes me feel very silly."

"I will write an interview for you," he said, jokingly. "You can keep it on hand and pass it out whenever the little boys come to call." He looked at her intently for a few moments. "What do you do in these places?" he asked, looking out of the window, with an air of aloofness that made Evelyn smile. "How do you fill up your days?"

"We often travel, you know. Then, when we stay for a few days in one place, I walk in the morning, and in the afternoon I read a little, and write letters, and before dinner I take a nap. I never miss the nap."

Thayer rose guiltily. "And at this moment you ought to be getting your sleep?"

Evelyn shook her head. "Oh, no, I'm not such a slave to habit as that. If you were to go now, I should begin to read your play."

"Enough!" Thayer laughed, throwing back his shoulders. "Away I go! I wish we could have dinner together," he said, wistfully. "But Saunderson sent me a rather peremptory invitation to dine with him and talk business." He held out his hand. "I shall see you after the first act." He hesitated, apparently trying to think of something he had forgotten. "Tell Miss Guernsey I'm sorry not to have seen her," he added, and taking his hat, he shook hands with Evelyn a second time and departed.

Evelyn went at once to her room and, loosening her hair, she lay on the bed and began to read. She had just reached the last scene of the first act when Madge burst in, her face flushed from her



exercise. "He's here," she cried, and noticing the manuscript in Evelyn's hand, she went on: "Ah, then you've seen him. So that's the piece, is it? caught a glimpse of him as I was riding along the street. Lovely roads for wheeling here. I don't think he recognised me. He was walking along with that kind of a guying look on his face, you know. He's just a little superior, don't you think so?"

"No," said Evelyn, beginning to read again.

"Well, you needn't be so hateful about it. How is the piece, anyway?"

"I'll give you this act in a minute. You'll like

it," Evelyn added, significantly.

"Oh, I suppose by that you don't like your own part. Well, I guess I'd better go into my room and wash up a bit first. What does he call it?"

"He hasn't given it a title yet."

A few moments later Madge returned, looking fresh and trig. She threw herself across the foot of the bed, letting her head rest on Evelyn's knees. Evelyn was still reading. Madge took up the manuscript of the first act, and for several moments neither spoke. Then Madge exclaimed: "Well, my goodness, he — " She looked at Evelyn and checked herself. For more than an hour they read in silence. Then Evelyn rose, sighed heavily, and, walking toward the bureau, she leaned forward, with both hands on the white marble covering, and looked at herself for a long time. Madge watched her.

"Seeing yourself in the part?"

Evelyn turned away. "I was wondering if I looked as tired as I feel."

Madge raised one arm. "Now don't say a word till I finish this act."

Evelyn sat in one of the soiled plush chairs and began to brush her hair. Finally, Madge threw down the manuscripts and rose dramatically.

"It's a great play! It's a great part for me. But the best part is the man's part. You ain't in it."

"That's exactly what I think," Evelyn remarked.

- "Well, it seems to me he's given you a pretty hard throw-down!" Madge exclaimed, indignantly. "Why" the soubrette looked vaguely around the room, with distress in her face "it's entirely different from what I thought it was going to be. He roasts the swells just as much as he does the actors. But ain't he clever, though! And what splendid character parts! Why, every part is good even the bits."
- "Yes, he has learned to make good use of his material," Evelyn agreed.
- "I suppose that old comedy woman Mrs. Vernon, is it? I suppose Mrs. Barton will get that."
- "Yes, it will be a splendid part for her. The best chance she's had for years."
- "Well, it's a Harry Davidson piece all right. If Harry gets it, it'll make him. Perhaps Saunderson will send him out as a star." Madge hesitated. "Would you play Alice, as it is now, I mean?"
- "Of course I would," Evelyn replied, and Madge looked disgusted.
- "You have no more idea of getting along!" she said, scornfully. "I don't see how you ever made a living in this business. Now if I was in your boots, if I knew Leonard Thayer as well as you do, I'd make him write up that part and put a lot more



into it. Some of the speeches that are given to that other girl — "

"Jenny Ballou?" Evelyn asked, smiling.

"No, I don't mean Jenny Ballou. That Sarah Crawford. Now you ought to have some of those."

"And hurt the piece," Evelyn went on.

"Oh, hurt your grandmother! However, if you can't take care of your own interests, all right. I'm satisfied with what I shall get. If they only let me play Jenny Ballou as I think it ought to be played I'll make the hit of my life. Perhaps Saundie will send *me* out with a company one of these days, if I can get the right kind of a play." Madge threw out her right arm and assumed a dramatic attitude. "I tell you who could play Alice — Belle Livingstone."

Evelyn looked surprised. For a few moments she did not speak. "So she could," she finally agreed.

That night at the theatre Leonard Thayer met Evelyn and Madge between the first and the second acts. He laughed in his most boisterous manner when they told him of their appreciation of his play, and he looked at Madge with quizzical tolerance, when she exclaimed:

"But I do think you were mean to Alice Hastings. You might have made her part the best in the piece."

"Ah, Miss Johnson and I understand about that, don't we, Miss Johnson?"

"I think so," Evelyn replied, with confusion in her face.

"Well, you two are the queerest things," Madge went on. "Only remember!" — she turned to walk to her dressing-room, giving Thayer a coquettish

glance over her shoulder — "as Jenny Ballou, I shall expect to be featured."

"Oh, you'll be the whole show!" Thayer cried after her. Then he turned to Evelyn, his face growing serious. "I'm honestly delighted that you think so well of the play. I'm going to leave it with Saunderson. He has an idea it may do for Davidson. He's going to make a star of Davidson if he can get what he calls 'the right vehicle."

"We spoke of that," said Evelyn, taking a deep breath. She was asking herself if she were really disappointed with Alice Hastings? Had she been so foolish as to allow herself —?

"I've been so set up over the way the piece wrote itself I'm going to start in on another," Thayer went on, and he would have begun an outline of the plot if she had not been obliged to hurry away. "Oh, it will keep," he said, when she had apologised.

"Perhaps you'll let me come and talk it over with you to-morrow."

Thayer travelled with the company for a week. In Columbus, where they went on leaving Toledo, he read his comedy to Saunderson, who then gave it to Davidson to read, and, on receiving Davidson's approval, accepted it at once. The silent feud that had continued between the actor and the dramatist since the rehearsals of "Deception" ended in the actor's delight in the piece and the chief part. Manager, actor, and author began to have daily conferences with regard to preparations for the new production. They agreed that no soubrette could be secured better suited to Jenny Ballou than Madge Guernsey, and Saunderson proposed that Miss Johnson be offered the part of Alice. "I think we'd

better not decide on that for awhile," said Thayer, and both actor and manager looked surprised, asserting that Miss Johnson was "reliable" and would be sure to "make good." Besides, she had done so well in "Deception" that she'd probably had offers from other managers already. "Well, we'll decide on that in a few days," said Thayer, with an authority he could not have assumed a year before. That afternoon, when he went out for a long tramp into the country with Evelyn, he told her of the talk

"I don't really want you to play Alice," he said, and she turned her head away, without speaking.

"I don't want you to act at all next season," he went on, quietly, but with the quizzical smile that she had so often noticed on his face of late. When it disappeared, however, his eyes had grown very serious. "I want you to help a poor devil of a playwright with his plays. I want you to help him make something of himself."

"I don't recognise the description," she said, with a faint smile. She knew from the feeling in her lips that her face had grown pale.

"Well, perhaps it isn't a very good description. I'm not really poor, and if my new comedy makes a success I shall have a very neat addition to my already adequate income. I've never felt quite so rich as I do at this moment. I've never realised what a delightful thing it was to tell some one I care for that I have money enough to make her comfortable. I'm certain I could make you more comfortable in New York than you've been in some of these Ohio hotels."

Evelyn had begun to walk more rapidly, and

Leonard Thayer had fallen slightly behind her. "Won't you please take it a little easier?" he said, pretending to be out of breath.

She slackened her pace, and he saw that there were tears in her eyes. "Evelyn," he said, taking the tips of her fingers in his hand, "I've been in love with you ever since I've known you."

- "Since those rehearsals?" she asked, surprised at the question and at the sound of her own voice, which was full and clear. She had feared it might break.
- "No, I didn't know you then, and I didn't like you very much then, either. I "

"Oh, I knew that," she interposed.

"You did?" he said, in surprise. "Well, did you know—" He hesitated. "Do you know—" The clasp of his hand tightened.

"Don't, please don't," she said, gently.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," he exclaimed, and he drew away from her.

"I don't think I'm managing this very well," he said, and they both laughed. A little tear rolled

gently down on her cheek.

"Evelyn, I want you to marry me. I want you to be my wife soon. I want you to give up this existence and just — well, just be happy, that is, if you can be happy with me. That's what I'm trying to say. Will you, Evelyn?"

For a long time they walked on in silence. He did not dare to speak for fear of saying in his nervousness something that would sound flippant. Finally, he saw that she was too upset to trust herself to reply.

"Don't say anything, now," he went on, "only



believe, do believe that I — that I love you very dearly."

To his astonishment, she stopped. "Let us go back," she said. "I'm afraid I've walked too far. I shall be tired out for the performance tonight."

He at once became solicitous. He wished to stop at the nearest house and try to engage some sort of vehicle to drive her to the hotel; but she refused. He asked her to take his arm, and she shook her head. He looked bewildered. "I hope I haven't hurt you," he remarked, at last.

"Oh, no," she replied. "I'm just — I think I'm a little nervous and hysterical. I shall be well in a few minutes." She began to smile and the look of concern deepened in his eyes. "I'm really all right again," she insisted.

"Oh!" he said, and they lapsed into silence. After a long interval Evelyn began to speak. "I've been very much upset during the past year or two," she said, "and I haven't the self-control that I used to have. I'm often foolish and I feel ashamed. So please forgive me if I seemed — if I seemed — "

"Oh, there isn't anything to forgive," he said, gently.

"And please don't bring up this subject again for awhile. Let me think about it till — well, till the year's work is over. That won't be so very long now," she concluded, breathlessly.

"You may have all the time you like," he said, giving her a rapturous look, and they walked along together slowly and contentedly.

XL.

The company arrived in Boston on a rainy Sunday night. Evelyn had asked Mrs. Bowen to engage rooms for herself and Madge at the Mount Vernon Street boarding-house where Mrs. Bowen lived, and she knew that she could not reach the place by street-car. So she decided to be extravagant, and she told Madge that in honour of her return to Boston they should drive up in a cab. Mrs. Bowen was eagerly waiting for them, and hurried with them to the rooms which she had had prepared for them. On the table, in the front room that looked out on the street and gave a view of part of the Common, Evelyn noticed a bunch of roses.

"Oh, how good of you!" she said to Mrs. Bowen. She bent over to smell the flowers and discovered a card nestling in the leaves. She glanced at it, flushed, and thrust it into a pocket.

"Yes, wasn't it good of me?" said Mrs. Bowen, with a queer little inflection.

"How is Mr. Bowen?"

"Oh, well, I think, from his letters. He won't get back from his Western trip till September." Mrs. Bowen sighed. "Sometimes I wish there weren't any business in the world."

Evelyn did not see Oswald Webb until the following Tuesday. The play had been well received



the night before, and the audience and the critics had been generous to her as a Bostonian.

"I thought I wouldn't come till it was over. I thought I'd let you have your triumph first," he explained, with a smile.

"You didn't send the novel," she said, reproach-

fully. "Have you brought it?"

He shook his head. "I've destroyed it."

"Destroyed it?" She looked at him in consternation.

He nodded. "I'm sure I did right."

"Why did you do it? Were you discouraged?"

"No, but I had an awakening." he said, laughing at his own mysteriousness. Then as she continued looking at him with bewilderment in her face, he went on, "I wonder if you noticed it?"

"Noticed it?"

"I mean the story. I wonder if you noticed in those first chapters what I discovered the other day."

A look of understanding appeared in her face.

"Ah, you did notice?"

"I'm not sure that you mean what I mean," she said. "Won't you tell me what you mean?"

He hesitated a moment. "That's what I came for," he replied more seriously. Then he looked down at his hands. "I had nearly finished it," he said, after a little pause.

"How I wish I could have seen it."

"I'm sure it's all right, and I'm glad I've done it."

"You're glad you've destroyed it?"

"Well, I didn't mean that. But I am glad that

I destroyed it, too. I was bound to do that. I meant that I was glad I'd-written it."

"Why should you be glad to have so much labour thrown away?"

"Because I don't think it was thrown away. It was a preparation, a relief, a lesson, a discovery—a great many things."

She looked mystified again. "I don't understand."

"Oh, I'm sure you will understand," he said, with a nervous laugh. "Some people wouldn't, but you will." He looked at her and laughed the nervous laugh again. "Didn't you suspect that the story was all about myself?" he asked, suddenly.

She sat back in her seat and drew a long breath. "Oh, is that it?"

"Didn't you?"

"I-I think I half suspected."

"And I didn't suspect till I'd nearly reached the end. I found that I was plucking out my heart's secrets and putting them into my novel. I suppose it's natural for a man to do that. They say you can't help doing it with your first book, and that novel was like a first book after my — my emancipation."

"Your emancipation?" she repeated.

"Yes, my literary emancipation," he explained, with a laugh.

"You mean that in those twelve years when you weren't writing stories you'd stored up experiences and they came out unconsciously."

"Exactly. I knew you'd understand."

"I should think that would be natural," she said, thoughtfully.



"I don't know how much you've heard about my life - my married life," he went on, rapidly, as if speaking under excitement. "But even if you haven't heard things — I know how people talk you must have inferred. I want to tell you something about it — as much as I ought to tell. It wasn't the happiest of lives; and perhaps it was my fault; sometimes I think it was. But it - it was a mistake from the beginning. At the time I thought I was in love; I am sure of that. But I resolved never to let her know that I had been mistaken. I gave myself up to her. I gave everything I could give, even my ambition, the most precious of all and the hardest to give up. The first two years of my life — while I was waking up to what I had done - oh, they maddened me. I hadn't learned patience then. I wrote my second book; you think it's morbid; I don't see how it could help being morbid. But she was jealous even of my work. Then I gave up writing to please her. But I had to do something; so I read philosophical works, and I argued and argued with her till her beliefs were gone, and to her dying day she never forgave me."

For a moment he sat without speaking. Then he said, "I've told you this because — because I'm in love with you. I didn't know it myself — until I found it out from the story. It may seem very foolish. It was just as if some other self, buried away down beneath consciousness, had told me. Do you know what I mean?"

She bowed her head. "I think I have felt something like that."

"Well, it's this second self," he went on, with



a smile, "that writes my stories for me. It's very much wiser and more subtle than my first self. Oh, it told me a great many things about myself. But the most important thing it told me was that I loved you."

"You don't really expect me to accept an offer made on such flimsy authority as *that*, do you?" she asked, with an amused look and with a feeling of wonder that she should be able to make a joke on such an occasion.

"I can't say that I expect anything," he replied, seriously. Then he added more cheerfully, "My second self hasn't told me that you are in love with me."

She turned her head away.

"Oh, I don't expect you to worship an old fellow like me," he went on. "Why, I'm nearly forty-five. I've passed the intense age. But I think I care for you with something more than a boy's love. You seem to me all that a woman should be. I'm very selfish in my love—I confess that; but I suppose all men are."

"I wish you hadn't spoken to me in this way,"

she said. "I'm so sorry."

"Do you mean that you don't care for me?"

"I think I do care for you," she replied, dropping her eyes again. "I like you and I — I respect you."

"Thank you for that. It's something," he said, "though it's rather non-committal. But I can't expect you to care for me as I care for you. That would be too much."

"I don't care for you in that way," said Evelyn, feeling that she must make her meaning clear at any cost.



"Do you mean that you can't marry me?" he asked, gently.

She bowed, and said, "Yes."

"But I don't want you to marry me now. I'll wait. There is no hurry. That is, there is no hurry so far as I am concerned. I love you so much that I can't bear the thought of your being out in the world, in such a hard world as yours is, too. I have always seen that you weren't fit for that. You were made to be happy, and you were made to help others to be happy, too. I can't tell you how precious you seem to me, how good you are with your right understanding and your patience. Don't you think I know all you have been through, all you've had to contend against? It's that that has made you so dear to me."

"Oh, don't, please don't. I don't deserve it. I know how weak I've been."

"No, you haven't been weak," he went on, quietly. "You've been a woman, that's all, and you've had to face the world like a man. We are made to meet these trials — most men. Those that don't meet them and overcome them are sure to have others just as bad. Through all that you've had to do, you've kept womanly and true."

"Oh, no, no," she said, "I've failed where others have succeeded. I'm not half so — half what you

think."

"But you do care for me a little, don't you? I — thought —"

"Oh, yes, I know," she said. "I've done wrong. I must have made you think so. That was because I didn't know my own mind."

"But it's a woman's privilege to change her

mind as often as she likes," he interposed, with a smile.

"It was on account of that — on account of the talk I had with Mrs. Webb," she went on, determined to justify herself, "when she was dying. It was that that made me so — so uncertain about what I ought to do."

"The talk with Mrs. Webb?" he repeated, mystified.

"Yes," she replied. "I thought that perhaps she told you. She said you were in love with me then."

She turned away from him for fear of meeting his glance; so she did not see the look that appeared in his face.

"She told you that I was in love with you then?" he repeated, blankly. She did not reply, and in a moment he went on, bitterly, "She told you that, I suppose, to turn you against me."

"Oh, no, no. You misjudge her. I knew it was only her fancy. At first it did shock me. Then I saw that she was not to blame."

"It was not true," he said, his face whitening.
"I liked you, I respected you then. But I never wavered from my loyalty to her during all the years of our married life."

"Oh, I understand, I understand," she said, help-lessly. "I ought not to have told you. But I felt that I must to explain, to show you why I have been so inconsistent. At first it horrified me, and then I tried to be fair, to be fair to you. For a time it made me fancy that I really did care for you, just because I wanted to be fair. I said to myself that I wouldn't let the foolish fancy of

a dying woman make me do you a wrong. Oh, I see how silly it all was."

"No, not silly," he said, gently. "I can understand it. And you are quite right to tell me. Besides, it is presumption for me, for a man as old as I am, with a broken life, to ask you to share it with him. I might have known that it couldn't be, that I should have to accept my life as I'd made it. I'm always preaching that doctrine. Yet I thought that I might be the exception. Life is before you, a long life with a great deal of happiness, I hope. After all, youth belongs to youth, and you will marry some young fellow and help him to make the best of his life. And there will be no — one that will wish you happiness more heartily than myself."

He offered her his hand and she gave him hers, keeping her head turned away from him.

"Perhaps he has already made his appearance," he said, as he still held her hand. "Is it fair for me to ask if he has? Is he the one that has made things so clear to you?"

She did not answer for a moment, then she said: "There is some one that I - I -"

"I ought not to have asked," he said, quietly, with a little smile. "I'm premature. But it will come out all right. I am sure of that. Don't you know, there are some women who are made to make others happy, and they can't do that without being happy themselves. You are one of them."

"Oh, no, no." She drew her hand from his and let it fall by her side. "Sometimes I think I have been made for unhappiness. I've had so much already."



"Only those, you know, who have been unhappy can really know what happiness is." Then, after a pause, during which they stood facing each other, she with her head down as if she were the one who had received rather than dealt the blow, he went on:

"You may be sure that it will be all right. I only hope he is worthy of you."

His gloves were lying on the table, and he turned to take them; he held her hand for a moment. "I shall see you before — before you leave Boston."

"We end our season here," she said.

"And what will you do then?"

"I don't know. My plans are unsettled."

He smiled faintly. Then he bowed, and left the room.

XLI.

It was the last night of the season at the Hollis Street Theatre. Evelyn had just left the stage after her first scene in the last act. She stood in the wings a moment and looked out at the audience. In the fourth row of the orchestra sat Mrs. Bowen, the Stearns boys, and Ned Osgood. They had all seen the play before, and at Mrs. Bowen's suggestion they had made up a little party to attend this performance.

Helen Gordon presently came up.

"Last time; last time," she said, playfully, to Evelyn.

"Is it the last time for you?" Evelyn asked.

"Yes," Miss Gordon replied, with a smile. "That's just what I intended to tell you. I've kept it very quiet, but I felt I must let you know. I'm going to be married."

"Married!" Evelyn repeated.

"Oh, I remember. You needn't remind me. I know just what I said. But dear me, I'm always saying those things. Who do you suppose it is?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Evelyn, feeling sure that it couldn't be any of the men in the company.

"Why, Judge Cowdrey, of course," cried Miss Gordon, with a convulsion of rapture and embarrassment. "He was so kind and so attentive that I really couldn't refuse him. Of course, he isn't so very young, he's fifty-five. But he's ever so rich, and he has a beautiful place in Cedarhurst. We shall live there, except in winter. We'll come to town then."

"And are you going to leave the stage?" Evelyn asked. It seemed to her that if a woman ever belonged to the stage that woman was Helen Gordon.

"Yes, for a time, anyway. My friends all say that I can't stay off, and they think I'm crazy to get married again. But we've talked it all over, Judge Cowdrey and I. His name is Rutherford. Pretty, don't you think so? Mrs. Rutherford Cowdrey! What a splendid name to star under! Well, he's promised that after we've been married a year, if I want to go on the stage again, he'll put me at the head of a company. But he thinks that I'll get so interested in society that I sha'n't want to. Well, I don't know. I've made my hit, anyway. Hasn't it been a great season for me?"

"Yes, it has," said Evelyn, sincerely. "And

you've deserved all your success."

"How good of you to say that! Do you know when we played in 'As You Like It' together, I was kind of jealous of you. You see, I'm awfully frank. I hate deceit. But you've been awfully nice this season, and you've done splendidly yourself."

"Thank you," said Evelyn, amused at Miss Gordon's patronising manner, but appreciating the effort to be generous.

"Have you signed with Saunderson again?"

"No," said Evelyn.



- "Why, I thought he wanted you for Leonard Thayer's new play?"
 - "He did speak to me, some time ago."
- "Dear me! How swell we're getting, refusing offers from Saunderson. What have you got? Something better? You aren't going to star, are you?"
- "No," Evelyn replied, with a smile. "I haven't signed at all."

"What! You don't mean to say that you are

going to get married, too?"

- "Oh, I don't know what I shall do," Evelyn replied, drawing away and hurrying back to her dressing-room. She found Madge there, trying to close one of her trunks. "I say," cried the soubrette, without turning round, as she struggled with the strap, "do you remember a year ago that last night up in Yonkers?"
 - "I'm not likely to forget it."

"It's a good deal different from this, ain't it? What a lot of things have happened since then!"

"Yes, what a lot," Evelyn echoed, twisting a curl before the mirror.

"Well, you're a lucky girl, that's all I can say." Then Madge went on, as if continuing a train of thought. "Jimmy'll be wild when he hears I've signed with Saunderson again."

"You'll lose him if you don't look out," said Evelyn. "He'll take some one else."

"Well, I guess I ain't going to give up the stage for any man. I'm not like you. Wasn't I smart to hold off till Saunderson gave me the five dollars extra? You ought to have heard us wrangle this morning in Davis's office. He'd just come in from New York, and he was as sleepy and cross as a bear. But I showed him I wasn't afraid of him, and he kind of chippered up after awhile."

"Your habit of holding off will get you into

trouble one of these days," said Evelyn.

"Well, managers have a good deal more respect for you. But I must say Saundie was awfully nice about you. You ought to have heard him crack you up."

"What did he say?" Evelyn asked, absently, as

if thinking of something else.

"Well, he said he was sorry to lose you. He said there was a part in the new piece that you would have been great in. But he said you were too good for the business, and you were sensible to get out of it when you got the chance."

"Did he — did he seem surprised?" Evelyn asked, looking into the looking-glass and rubbing the edge of her lips. She could see Madge's reflection, and Madge knew she could see it; they knew that they were watching each other covertly.

Madge deliberated a moment before replying. "Well, no; he said he'd known it for a week."

Madge leaned over in the chair where she was sitting, rested her chin on her two hands, with her elbows on her knees, and stared at Evelyn.

"Well, you're the slyest thing I've ever seen in my life."

"What makes you think so, Madge?" said Evelyn.

"When Mrs. Bowen told me this morning," Madge went on, ignoring the question, "you could have knocked me down with a feather. To think I've been with you all these months and I've never



suspected. I knew something was up; but I never thought it could be that."

"I didn't intend to be mean, Madge," said Evelyn, still keeping her reflection in the mirror to escape facing Madge. "It was all—all uncertain till a little while ago."

Madge became thoughtful again. "To think that you should get ahead of me, after all," she said, half-mournfully, "but that's always the way with you deep things!"

"Get ahead of you?"

"Yes, get ahead. That's what I said," Madge retorted, almost petulantly. "He'll use it as an argument. I've been singing your praises for years. He thinks you're a paragon. I used to tell him when I got old I was going to live with you. Now, what'll he say? He'll just argue and argue. He's so tiresome when he argues."

"I'm very sorry, Madge," said Evelyn, with a smile.

"Well, it can't be helped, I suppose," Madge sighed. Then she asked: "When's he coming on?"

"To-night," Evelyn replied, seeing her reflection change colour again. "He's going to read the last act of the new piece to Mr. Saunderson in the morning — a new act."

"Is he in front?" Madge asked, eagerly.

"I don't know. He was coming on the three o'clock train."

"Oh, then the telegram this morning was from him," Madge said, half to herself. She lapsed into silence again, which she broke suddenly: "Who do you suppose I saw in front a few minutes ago—right behind Mrs. Bowen and the boys?"

"I don't know. Who was it?" Evelyn asked. Madge looked sharply at the reflection to see if it had been fibbing.

"Mr. Webb," she replied.

"Oh, yes, I saw him."

Madge turned from the reflection with an expression of vexation on her face: "Well, if you ain't the queerest thing!" And then as Evelyn made no comment, she continued: "Why, I supposed that he was going to be the one."

She waited for Evelyn to speak; but as Evelyn was still silent, apparently absorbed in the niceties of her make-up, she resumed again with a temerity that showed she was reduced to desperate extremities: "I guess I was right, after all, about his looking down on actresses."

Her remark was a distinct success, for Evelyn turned sharply around. "How can you say such a thing! Mr. Webb is as broad-minded as any man I know. I don't know any man that is broader-minded or more chivalrous toward all women than he is."

"Well, there's no use in getting so worked up about it." Then when Evelyn had turned to the mirror again, Madge added, helplessly: "If you ain't the queerest thing. You get mad when I say one thing, and then when I say just the opposite you get mad about that, too."

"I'm not mad, Madge," said Evelyn, with a smile. "And I'm sorry," she went on, "if I've offended you."

They sat facing each other for a moment; then Madge jumped impatiently from her seat and threw



her arms around Evelyn's neck. They clung together, half-laughing and half-crying.

"You know I'm just as glad as I can be," Madge exclaimed, hysterically. "There's no one like you in the whole wide world, and there's no one I love half so much. Only it does seem hard to think we sha'n't be together any more. It just breaks my heart to think of it."

"But we shall be together a great deal, dear," said Evelyn, patting Madge affectionately on the back. "I shall be in New York, you know, and you'll stay with us. It will be just the same again."

"No, it won't," Madge moaned. "I guess I know better than that. I guess I know you're a good deal better than I am. I've told Jimmy so a hundred times, and he knows it, even if he don't say so. You'll be a big swell, an' I'll just be a poor actress, an' I'll get old, and it'll be —"

"There, there, Madge, please don't. It's silly to talk that way; besides, you'll spoil your make-up."

"Well, let me give you one good kiss and a good hug," said Madge. "There! You know I hope you'll be awfully happy. And if I've been hateful about it, it's just because I'm so sorry to —"

"Yes, yes, I've known all the time, Madge," said Evelyn, as the soubrette lifted her head from her shoulder and dried her eyes.

Oswald Webb was sitting so near the stage that Evelyn could see him across the footlights; she noticed that the seat beside him was vacant. During the last act, however, a young man came in and took the place. Madge, who was standing in the wings in her gorgeous pink silk frock, with bare neck and arms, saw this proceeding, and, catching

Evelyn's eye, laughed and threw a kiss at her. When she went on the stage, she whispered:

"Ain't it funny? S'pose he knows — Mr. Webb, I mean? P'r'aps he's telling him now." Evelyn tried to look composed, but she felt miserable. Madge's vivacity made her scene go briskly, but Evelyn imagined that the act dragged, and she wondered if it ever would end. When the curtain fell she breathed a sigh of relief. Helen Gordon and Harry Davidson were in the final tableau, and as soon as the audience had disappeared from their sight, Helen Gordon scrambled from the floor, where she had fallen prostrate, and cried dramatically, lifting her arms in apostrophe:

"Farewell, farewell, dear old stage! How I love you! And, oh, how I just hate to leave you!"

Miss Gordon was obliged to throw herself on the floor again, however, as the applause of the audience sent the curtain up again. Miss Gordon was smiling when she picked herself up a second time. wonder if that was an omen," she said, passing her handkerchief over her lips. "I may come back to it, after all." Then she turned to Evelyn again, and taking her hand, she said:

"Madge has told me. I'm so glad. He's just the right kind for you, and you're awfully lucky to get him. You weren't fit for this business, anyway."

"I suppose not," said Evelyn, who didn't enjoy being told by others what she often told herself.

"I suppose you'll live in New York and take in all the first nights," Miss Gordon went on. intend to. And you can give him lots of points about plays, from your experience. Most of those literary men that try to write plays are awfully



impracticable. It seems strange," she mused, holding her handkerchief in a ball in her right hand with one finger on her lip, "but you don't think you'll go on again — really?"

Evelyn shook her head.

Miss Gordon smiled.

"He could write a play for you and give you all the fat."

Evelyn smiled. "It wouldn't tempt me."

"I wish he'd write a play for me," the actress went on, oblivious of her retirement. "I'll call to see you, anyway, and we must have you down to Cedarhurst. We're to be married early next month, and then we'll go to Newport for a while and perhaps to Narragansett. But we'll be back by September. When is your wedding to be?"

"I don't know exactly," said Evelyn, quailing before Miss Gordon's definiteness. "Not before

August, anyway."

"And will you go to Cohasset again?"

"Yes. I shall be with Mrs. Bowen till—till August."

Miss Gordon took herself off to her dressingroom, and before Evelyn could escape several members of the company surrounded her, clamouring congratulations; Madge had evidently been busy during the whole of the evening. Evelyn finally broke away from them, however, and hurried into the wings.

XLII.

In the corridor Evelyn came face to face with Mrs. Bowen and the boys, who were talking with Oswald Webb and Leonard Thayer. As the boys had been dining at the boarding-house, she shook hands with Thayer and Webb only.

"We've just heard the news," said Ned. "If

Mr. Thayer weren't here we'd all kiss you."

"Well, you may kiss me if you like," Evelyn said.

"I don't dare in public," Ned replied, shaking her hand and blushing furiously.

"I suppose that Roscoe and Gerald wouldn't kiss me even if I asked them," she said, as they offered her their hands.

"We're afraid of setting Ned a bad example," said Roscoe.

"He's been worse than ever lately," said Gerald. "I wish you could have seen how he behaved during the play. He kept clapping at the wrong places."

They followed Evelyn to the dressing-room, where Madge was already in street costume.

"It was very lucky, our meeting Mr. Thayer." said Mrs. Bowen, in her soft voice. "We couldn't have come here if we hadn't. Evelyn wouldn't let us when we suggested it to-night," she said, turning to Thayer.



Ned looked around ecstatically. "It reminds me of the night I 'suped' at the opera."

"I was afraid Mr. Saunderson wouldn't like it,"

Evelyn explained.

"I didn't ask his permission," said Thayer.

"And didn't the doorkeeper object?" Evelyn asked, knowing the invincible nature of the doorkeeper.

"Not when he heard I was the Great Author,"

Thayer replied, grandly.

"I'm sorry I can't ask you all in," Evelyn said, as they stood at the door of the dressing-room. "The place wouldn't hold you all."

Madge was already deep in conversation in the corridor with the boys and with Willie Boyd, who had been waiting for her. Leonard Thayer began to talk to Mrs. Bowen, who had walked a few yards away and was standing under the gaslight; so Oswald Webb had an opportunity to speak with Evelyn alone.

"It must seem very odd, my coming here tonight," he said. "But when Thayer asked me to come I couldn't refuse, especially after what he had told me."

"It was very kind of you to come," she replied.

"It's just the right thing. I wonder I hadn't thought of it. It only shows what a stupid old fogy I am."

"Thank you," she said.

"I wanted especially to see you to-night," he added, "to bid you good-bye."

"Are you going away?"

"Yes, I'm going to sail next week — from New York."



- "And you are coming back in the fall?"
- "Perhaps. I can't tell yet."
- "But your plans The Universe? Have you decided?"
- "I've decided not to do anything about it till the fall," he interrupted. "The offer is open to me till then."
- "I hope that you will take it. It would be such a pity not to." Then Evelyn added, impulsively: "Before you go won't you do something for me?"

He looked at her gravely.

- "Promise me not to not to give up your ambition, I mean your work. It seems so foolish to give up on on account " she stammered, and he helped her out of the difficulty by finishing the sentence for her.
 - "On account of you?"
 - "On account of me or any woman."
 - "But it was you who gave me my incentive."
- "Then you must keep it up yourself," she went on. "I'm sure you are strong enough for that."
 - "Will it make any difference to you really?"
- "Yes, it will make a great difference," she replied, simply. "You have done so much for me, and I want—"
- "I have done so much," he repeated, in a tone of surprise. "What have I done?"
- "Oh, you made me see things so differently when I was unhappy, when everything seemed dull and sordid to me."
 - "Thank you for telling me that," he said.
 - "Then you will promise?"



"I'll promise to try — to do my best," he said, with a laugh, at the same time extending his hand.

Thayer came back with Mrs. Bowen to say goodbye to Webb.

"So we sha'n't see you till the fall, then?" he said. "I hope you'll have a pleasant trip, and when you come back you must put that *Universe* scheme of yours through. We need men like you in New York."

Webb broke away from the group, bade Madge and the boys good-bye, and disappeared down the corridor.

Mrs. Bowen had watched the scene with her bright little eyes, gathering plentiful material for one of the most exciting of her letters to her husband. In spite of her bright looks, however, she was very tired, and Evelyn caught her yawning.

"You mustn't wait for me, dear," she said. "It will take half an hour to dress and pack my things. If you and Madge and the boys will go along, Mr. Thayer will take me home."

"But we're going to have a little supper, you know," Mrs. Bowen explained. "So hurry! You'll come, of course, Mr. Thayer. It's in honour of you, you know — and some one else." The alacrity with which she acted on Evelyn's suggestion made Thayer suspect that her yawn had been feigned.

It was a half-hour before Evelyn was ready to leave the theatre. Most of the actors had gone, and darkness and silence reigned in the place. She closed the door behind her and hurried down the corridor. Thayer was chatting with the doorkeeper. He took her bag from her hand and they left the theatre together.

"It was very nice of Mrs. Bowen to give me a chance to walk home with you alone," he said, when she had taken his arm.

"It was just like her," she replied. Her voice was partly muffled behind her thick veil.

The little side street where they were walking was nearly deserted, but from either end they could hear the clanging of the trolley-cars in Washington and Tremont Streets.

"I wanted to come on before last Tuesday," he said, "as soon as I got your letter. But I had to work over the third act with Saunderson. He wasn't satisfied with it as I first wrote it. Your letter made me very happy. I couldn't help writing," he went on. "I tried not to. I was afraid of shattering everything—all my hopes. Then I was afraid I couldn't finish the new act of the play if I—well, if you refused me."

"But you have finished it, haven't you?" she

asked.

"Yes, I have now, but I hadn't when I wrote that letter. I made a resolution not to speak out till I'd written the last line. Some one says that an author ought not to let anything interrupt his work; he ought to keep on writing whether he's in good spirits or bad spirits, or crossed in love, or anything else. Well, I used to think so, too. Then when the test came my theories went to the winds. I found myself writing as I had never written before, and I didn't want to spoil it all," he laughed, "for I knew that if I lost hope I never could finish the piece. You ought to have seen my work after I got your letter. My pen fairly flew!"

She laughed quietly, brushing her face against



his coat-sleeve. "You don't know how I — how glad I was to write it," she confessed.

They were in the glare of Tremont Street by this time; so he couldn't make the proper acknowledgment of this speech. He had to content himself with pressing her arm more closely in his own.

"Shall we take a car?" he asked.

"No, let's walk. It isn't far."

They said very little as they walked. They were content to be silent; they had things to say that were too fine for any speech. The great trees in the Common with their rich foliage were very sombre in the darkness of the night. As they turned up the path toward Beacon Street, he said: "I've been writing about people in love for years, and trying to tell how they felt. I thought I could imagine it. But that was a mistake." Then, as she did not answer, he went on: "Why, it makes the whole world seem different. I can't understand why people complain about life any more. I wouldn't change the world in any particular if I could."

She laughed softly again, and said that so much depended on the way you looked at things, on the point of view.

"Now to-night," he went on, as they walked more slowly up the hill, "as I talked with Oswald Webb, he seemed so sombre. It wasn't so much what he said, but the way he said it, and the way he looked at everything. I wanted to slap him on the back and say, 'Cheer up, old man! There's plenty in life for you, yet.' I thought he might have shown a little more spirit, too. I'd just told him the news."

[&]quot;Oh!" said Evelyn.

"Of course, he seemed glad and all that. But I wish he wouldn't take himself so seriously. He ought to get married again."

Then, feeling that unless she spoke out, she should be deceitful, she told him in a few words the whole story of her acquaintance with Oswald Webb.

"I must have tortured him," he said. "How often it is that one man's happiness makes another man's misery."

"Yes," she replied, clinging closer to his arm. "That's one of the terrible things about happiness."

For a week after the close of the season, Evelyn remained at the boarding-house with Mrs. Bowen. Then they both returned to Cohasset, where they had an impressive welcome from Mrs. Appleby, and a greeting, quieter, though none the less sincere, from Mrs. Appleby's husband. The boys had gone down to Maine for the summer, and to Evelyn the place seemed changed. Somehow she could not associate it with herself any more; she felt as if she had known it in a remote existence. Leonard Thayer retained the rooms he had taken at a Boston hotel, and appeared at the cottage every day, renewing with pleasure his acquaintance with the Applebys. Mrs. Appleby, who, in spite of the loss of her illusions, still loved the romantic aspects of life, used to voice her amazement at the fate that had drawn together two people who at intervals so distant had been included among her boarders. "Well, well!" she would say, as she stood at her window, and saw Evelyn and Thayer walking together, and she would remark to Mrs. Bowen, "Who'd have thought a year ago? Who'd have



thought? But I always said there was none too good for her!"

Though the new play had been approved in every detail by Saunderson, Leonard Thayer continued to work on it. When he solicited advice from Evelyn with regard to the actress who could play Alice, she told him of Madge's suggestion, and he received it with delight. "I'll wire Saunderson this very day to try to engage Miss Livingstone," he exclaimed.

Early in August Evelyn was married in Boston. Mrs. Bowen and the Applebys and Madge Guernsey were present at the ceremony. The little group sat at a wedding breakfast at the Parker House, and Evelyn and her husband took an afternoon train for New York. After a month on the Jersey coast, they returned to town so that Thayer might rehearse the new comedy, which Saunderson had decided to put on in October. They took rooms at a hotel, with the agreement that if the piece proved to be successful they should look about for a house. If it failed, they would content themselves with an apartment. It was not until the day before rehearsals began that the name was finally decided on. Thayer had submitted several titles to Saunderson who, after long discussion and argument, decided on a title of his own, "A Man of Honour." Evelyn attended several of the rehearsals, which moved far more smoothly than those in which she had figured so unhappily a year before. Belle Livingstone, who had eagerly accepted Saunderson's offer, showed from the first rehearsal that Madge had justly appreciated her qualities. Evelyn took pains to give Madge credit for the suggestion lead-

ing to the offer of the part. Miss Livingstone was so grateful that Evelyn could foresee harmonious companionship between the two girls. As for Mrs. Barton, she declared, with tears, that she had never been so happy in her life. Besides, Harry Davidson remained in good humour, and the company worked easily together. Madge Guernsey was delighted with her part and was impatient for the coming of the first night. So sure were all the actors of success that Evelyn felt secretly apprehensive. As the rehearsals progressed, several pieces made failures in New York and a bad season was prophesied. But the new comedy pleased both the audience and the critics. Harry Davidson was successfully established as a "star," Madge Guernsey won enthusiastic praise for the humour and the vivacity with which she played Jenny Ballou, and both Belle Livingstone and Mrs. Barton received good notices. On the day after the production Leonard Thayer had offers for three new plays, two from managers and one from a popular actor. He held the letters in his hand as he told his wife about the terms: "We might as well begin and look about for that house," he said, and he bent "Thank God for the forward and kissed her. theatre," he said.



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